



THE INDEPENDENT

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The man who can't catch Aids

Discovery may lead to vaccine

TOM WILKIE
Science Editor

Scientists have found a man who cannot catch the virus that causes Aids - and his blood may hold the key to developing the first vaccine.

In his blood the New Yorker Steve Crohn has the first known substance in the world that will defeat the HIV virus.

Scientists already knew of many individuals who remain healthy for a very long time between infection with HIV and developing full-blown Aids. The difference in the case of Mr Crohn is that he appears to be resistant to infection with HIV in the first place.

Mr Crohn, 49, a freelance editor for Fodor's Travel Guides, and another New Yorker who also appears to be immune, were discovered by a young Glasgow scientist, Dr. Bill Paxton, of the Aaron Diamond Aids Research Center, in New York. Dr Paxton and his colleagues have found a further 23 people who, although not completely immune, show some degree of resistance to HIV infection. Many of these individuals have remained free of HIV despite a history of unsafe sex with multiple sexual partners who subsequently died of Aids.

From these individuals, Dr Paxton and his colleagues have taken the white blood cells - known as CD4 cells - which are the particular target of HIV, cul-

tured the cells in the laboratory, and tried unsuccessfully to infect them with HIV. In the case of Mr Crohn's cells, the researchers could only get the infection to "take" by flooding the cultured cells with huge amounts of virus - far more than would be present in the course of a naturally occurring form of infection.

There have been indications that some people might be resistant to HIV infection, because of the chance shuffling of the genes they inherited from their parents. Some prostitutes in Africa have remained HIV free despite frequent unsafe heterosexual encounters in countries where the rate of HIV infection is very high.

However, this evidence is only statistical. The new research has identified specific individuals and their biochemistry to work out the precise mechanism of resistance.

Dr Paxton said yesterday, "If we can determine what is protecting these people, then you can envisage therapy or vaccine design."

Dr Paxton and his colleagues have already identified one set of biochemical compounds, known as chemokines, which appear to be acting in these people to defeat HIV. These substances were first recognised only five years ago and appear to play a role in the immune system - the body's defence against invading bacteria and

viruses. They report their findings in the April issue of the scientific journal *Nature Medicine*.

Conventional vaccines consist of antibodies to the infecting agent produced by the immune system but, partly because HIV subverts the cells of the immune system itself and partly because it is highly variable, no one has succeeded in producing a vaccine against it. The chemokines Dr Paxton and his colleagues have found are not antibodies. They are involved in the "inflammatory" response - when a wound or site of infection becomes inflamed.

"I do not believe that next week everybody will be injecting chemokines and cutting Aids, but definitely we're on a line," Dr Paxton said.

Dr Paxton stressed that any vaccine or treatment was still a long way off: "I'm really worried about how people will take this news - people should not give up a safe sex policy."

For Mr Crohn, the thought that his blood might hold a vital secret in the battle against Aids "would be very touching to me". His partner, Jerry Greenwood, died of Aids in 1982 - before the disease even had a name. "I haven't had a partner since," Mr Crohn said. "I've had affairs and several of the people I went with have died." To the prospect that a vaccine might be based on his blood, Mr Crohn could say only, "this is kind of wonderful".

Scientists have long theorised that when the universe came into being, about 15 billion years ago, the galaxies began to form where matter and energy were clumped together. Such variations in density should show up as different temperatures in the sky, since the universe was enormously hot at its birth. Space is not completely cold; in fact it has an effective temperature of 2.7C above absolute zero, where all motion stops entirely. But the variations are now tiny.

In 1992 the US space agency NASA offered definitive evidence of this, when its COBE satellite produced a picture of

Hot spots: The Cambridge University telescope image showing traces of the Big Bang in the night sky and (right) its position in relation to the stars

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Correspondent

The different colours in this picture represent a breakthrough by British technology - and our clearest picture yet of the origins of the universe.

The range of colours here represent a total temperature difference of just 0.00091 degree Centigrade, in a part of the night sky which reveals distant echoes of the Big Bang. It was captured by CAT, a new radio-telescope designed by physicists at Cambridge University and situated near the city.

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In 1992 the US space agency NASA offered definitive evidence of this, when its COBE satellite produced a picture of

the entire sky, showing "ripples" in its temperature, confirming the theories and giving a broad glimpse of the after-effects of the Big Bang.

This picture shows those ripples in far greater detail than COBE did, from a time when the universe was only about 300,000 years old. CAT is 40 times more sensitive to temperature variations than COBE, yet cost a fraction as much - £250,000, rather than \$300m.

Rather than a satellite, the team used three radio antennae, each 70 centimetres wide and two metres apart. This let them filter out the atmospheric effects



that usually trouble ground-based experiments.

Following the success of the work the British Government has agreed to fund a £2.5m array of 10 such antennae, which will be based on Mount Teide in Tenerife. The new telescope, known as the "Very Small Ar-

ray", will be used to help to answer more detailed questions about the age of the universe, its rate of expansion, and two key questions: how much unseen, or "dark", matter is out there, and how the galaxies formed at all.

The red comet, page 11

10 suicides after child abuse case

PATRICIA WYNNE DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

Ten young people killed themselves following their experiences at the hands of sex abusers in care homes in Clwyd, according to the independent report into the scandal, supervised by the county council.

The deaths are highlighted in the unpublished report's summary, where it calls for a full public judicial inquiry under local government legislation.

Sources also revealed that the inquiry team, led by John Jilings, former director of social services in Derbyshire, has called in the report for the North Wales police force to submit to an investigation by the

Police Complaints Authority. After a threat from its insurers that negligence cover could be revoked, Clwyd council put a block on publication of the 300-page report and gagged councillors from even revealing the call for a public inquiry.

The new disclosures came as North Wales Police signalled its readiness to get a High Court order to force Clwyd to release files on up to 30 young people as part of a fresh investigation into the activities of a local carer of children with a previous conviction for indecent assault.

In this second instance of Clwyd refusing to release crucial information about one of Britain's worst child abuse scandals, the council insists it is obliged to claim public interest immunity in relation to the documentation.

Officers want the files to trace the young people who were in care in Clwyd as children. The inquiry could eventually spread to other parts of the country, where the individual has had past responsibility for the care of about 1,000 young people.

Ron Davies, shadow Secretary of State for Wales, has written to William Hague, the Secretary of State, urging him to place the Jilings report in the House of Commons library - but no response from the Welsh Office had emerged last night.

Rhodri Morgan, Labour MP for Cardiff West, last night referred to the report as said to have taken their own lives. Where children's interests were in conflict with the authorities, the report says: "We have found that in many cases the interests of institutions and professions have come first instead."

David Owen, former Chief Constable of the North Wales force, also backed such an investigation once criminal trials had been concluded.

The Jilings report is also understood to make reference to "prominent" people being involved in the scandal, but says that it had neither the resources nor the authority to address that suggestion.

Most of the young people referred to in the report are said to have taken their own lives. Where children's interests were in conflict with the authorities, the report says: "We have found that in many cases the interests of institutions and professions have come first instead."

BT in
talks
on £35bn
merger

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

BT and Cable & Wireless are in talks which could lead to a £35bn merger - the largest in UK corporate history and considerably bigger than last year's £9.3bn merger of the Glaxo and Wellcome drug groups.

The merger discussions were confirmed last night by C&W, which is worth more than £11bn, after weeks of stock market speculation over the on-off relationship between the rival companies.

The merger would require Government permission and would inevitably result in the disposal of Mercury Communications, C&W's UK subsidiary and the single biggest competitor for BT.

The admission from C&W followed feverish rumours in the City, which were accompanied by surges in the share price of both groups. The company said that the talks were "exploratory" and "may or may not lead to a merger".

BT confirmed last night that talks between the two companies' advisers had taken place.

Sir Ian Vallance, BT's chairman, is believed to be have held talks since the end of last year with Brian Smith, C&W's chairman, and Rod Olsen, acting chief executive. His approach followed Cable & Wireless' descent into chaos after a bitter boardroom struggle.

The full story, page 23
Comment, page 25

The WORLD
of OLIVER
& CLAIRE

SIT DOWN WITH A NICE
CUP OF TEA AND ENJOY
THEM ON PAGE 30.



IN BRIEF

Soldiers guilty

Three British soldiers were found guilty yesterday of killing a young Danish woman in Cyprus. The court in Lanarca said that Allan Ford, 27, from Birmingham, Justin Fowler, 28, from Falmouth and Geoff Pernell, 24, from Oldbury, had committed manslaughter, conspiracy to rape and abduction in 1994. They will be sentenced next week.

Schools choice
All schools could be offered the chance to become fully selective in a White Paper that will be published in June. Page 3


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Major seeks European deal to end beef crisis

COLIN BROWN

John Major will today demand the lifting of the worldwide ban on British beef at the European summit in Turin in return for a package of measures to destroy millions of cows and compensate farmers, in the hope of restoring consumer confidence.

The first steps in a massive selective slaughter programme began last night when Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, announced a series of interim measures aimed at restoring confidence and persuading the European Commission to lift the ban.

They included an immediate ban on the sale of meat from

newly slaughtered cattle over 30 months old; extending specified bovine offal (SBO) controls to stop possibly infected cattle heads and lymph glands entering the food chain; £1.5m a week compensation to the rendering industry; and £50m a year in EU aid for the slanging of bull calves up to 10 days old.

The hard-bargaining was already under way on the British package on the eve of today's summit between European Commission and British officials, led by Richard Packer, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr Hogg will meet Franz Fischler, the European Commissioner in Brussels today.

The package, approved by the Cabinet yesterday, will include selective destruction of cows, and could last for years.

The BSE affair, described by

one official as a "huge crisis",

is certain to dominate the formal opening of the conference.

The final deal could be

reached at a meeting of agriculture ministers on Monday,

but Mr Major's key demand will

be for the early lifting of the ban,

which ministers believe is the

only hope of rebuilding consumer confidence.

The Prime Minister will be

seeking a cut in Britain's annual

contribution to the EU to pay

for the compensation, which could amount to £500m a year.

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news

Fast-track Bill to combat terrorists

DONALD MACINTYRE

The Government is planning to introduce a new raft of fast-track legislation to tighten security in the wake of IRA's decision to end the ceasefire and renew its bombing campaign.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, yesterday held private discussions with opposition spokesmen in the hope of securing cross-party support for legislation as early as next week.

The move follows representations by police to put tightened security checks - particularly on passengers using public transport - on a firmer statutory footing and to strengthen stop and search powers in relation to suspected terrorist offences.

Details of the discussions were being kept confidential last night but ministers are believed ideally to be seeking to secure the new powers before the Easter recess which begins next

Thursday. This would almost certainly only be possible if the government had cross-party support, including that of Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary who took part in yesterday's discussions.

Labour has been careful not to obstruct the Government on counter-terrorism measures and the party earlier this month shifted its stance towards the Prevention of Terrorism Act by deciding to abstain on the issue.

although 25 Labour MPs defied the leadership and opposed the renewal of the Act. For the previous 12 years Labour had opposed the renewal of the Act on the grounds that it suspended civil liberties with powers of detention without trial, and orders to exclude Northern Ireland from mainland Britain.

Substantially tighter security checks have already been introduced at Britain's 27 ports, along with greater use of closed-circuit television. Police have a

filmed record of the 7,000 vehicles coming into the country each day. Security checks have generally been tightened on passengers, luggage and vehicles passing through ferry ports, the Channel Tunnel and connecting railways.

But the police have also been pressing for measures to ensure that the newly tightened security is on a firm legal footing. One possibility is for vehicle

checks to be underpinned statutorily by an amendment to the Maritime Shipping and Aviation Act. But if there were cross-party support the required package could also be introduced under a simple piece of primary legislation.

Yesterday's talks are understood to have involved Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrats Law and Order spokesman, and Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionists' Security spokesman.

The SDLP and the Welsh and Scottish nationalists have also been informed.

The Intelligence and Security Committee said it would also investigate possible gaps in intelligence which may have helped lead to the Docklands bombing in February. The committee will also examine whether MI5 should be given the lead over police in Northern Ireland for counter-terrorism, as it has in the mainland.

IN BRIEF

Harrods make new claim against school

Harrods claimed in court that its reputation for all things excellent was in danger of being polluted by the "bad odour" of a sex scandal at a south London prep school.

The Knightsbridge store has asked the Court of Appeal to ban the prep from calling itself The Harroldian School on the grounds that it is passing itself off as having some connection with Harrods and trying to cash in on the company's good will. The judgement was expected yesterday, but in the meantime, Harrods came up with fresh evidence - press cuttings relating how the school's owner, Sir Alford Hounslow-Boswell, had sacked his wife Eliana as headmistress after she had an affair with a teacher.

Water bills promise

A water company with some of the highest charges in the country says that it will no longer disconnect domestic customers who do not pay up. South West Water will employ more debt counsellors and managers to help customers with financial difficulties, but will take court action against non-payers.

Holiday habits

Young male holidaymakers now seek sophistication rather than sun, sand and sex while on foreign trips, says a new survey. Pubbing, clubbing and sunbathing are very much out, as 18-34 year old British men opt for sport and cultural activities, reveal brewers Heineken.

Asbestos ruling

Judgement has been reserved in the Court of Appeal bid by engineering company T&N to overturn a High Court ruling that it must pay damages over two cancer victims who as children played in the drifts of white dust which blanketed the roads around their homes. The decision last year was the first time a court had awarded compensation for asbestos claims made by anyone other than workers.

Rugby player appeal

A rugby player who received the longest jail sentence ever imposed for on-field violence can appeal. But Gloucester lock Simon Dyer, 27, who was convicted of grievous bodily harm against an opponent and jailed for nine months, was refused bail by the Court of Appeal judge.

Collins quits band

Phil Collins has finally quit Genesis after more than 20 years in their lead singer. It has been revealed. The multi-instrumental drummer, singer and songwriter has decided to concentrate full time on his solo career. Album sales have topped 80 million since Collins, 45, took over as the band's singer from Peter Gabriel who quit in 1975.

Skeletons dug up

Quarry workers have unearthed the remains of at least a dozen humans who may have been ritually killed 4,000 years ago. The bodies, which include children, were found in an ancient channel of the River Trent in Nottinghamshire and date from the late neolithic or early bronze age, between 2,000 and 2,350 BC.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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The BSE risk: Ministers ponder logistics of mass slaughter as authorities reveal death of another victim

Doubt over vets' role in killing

JAMES CUSICK and PAUL FIELD

The co-operation of Britain's veterinary surgeons in any planned mass slaughter of cattle aimed at eliminating BSE was yesterday put in serious doubt.

Bob Stevenson, president of the British Veterinary Association, said crucial to the success of any mass slaughter would be the supervision of the killing by both Ministry of Agriculture vets and private practice vets.

He said the public would demand that vets were present to see that the killings were humane and that adequate precautions on the further spread of the disease were taken.

However Mr Stevenson said that calls for a mass slaughter meant "science was being left behind" and was an unnecessary sacrifice. "I would like to think vets would co-operate. But

there is serious question over whether many will have anything to do with this."

He added: "In 1967 both government vets and private practice vets formed a cohesive force to deal with foot and mouth disease. Today that cohesion does not exist."

In Cheshire a vet, Francis Anthony, said: "There will be no co-operation from the veterinary profession. Unless this slaughter is supervised by vets, the public will not be reassured about anything."

Mr Anthony said colleagues who studied the relevant scientific evidence, believed mass slaughter was unnecessary. "We are being asked to take part in a Frankensteinian slaughter."

If the Government do a turn on their response to the BSE crisis the most likely option would be the culling of older cattle.

There are only nine incineration plants in Britain licensed to handle around 1,000 cattle a week. These are already destroying 300 cows infected with BSE each week. Only 7 per cent of the older cows earmarked for culling could be cope with, a shortfall of around 750,000 head per year if the NFU proposal is adopted.

The use of household incinerators was dismissed by Phil Burns, of HM Pollution Inspectorate: "The sheer practicalities make it impossible. They are designed to burn paper and plastic not a tonne of meat."

Emission standards from 15 of the 35 domestic waste incinerators in Britain have failed to meet EU standards and are expected to be shut down by the end of the year.

However the Licensed Animal Slaughterers and Salvage Association, is convinced that if the NFU plans were reduced, incinerators could cope with around 3,000 a week, operating around the clock, seven days a week.

Chris Ashworth, technical adviser, said dairy cows at the end of their life should be culled and only those from herds with a confirmed BSE case in the past three years.

That would bring the figure down to between 100,000 and 150,000 a year. That number would decline over five years to around 50,000 a year. We could cope with that."

Results from a study, which started seven years ago to establish whether dams can pass BSE to their offspring, must be released rapidly and every regulation covering BSE must be reviewed.

The study is being run as a blind trial, with researchers not knowing which calves came from cattle with the disease and which came from cattle which are free of it. Seven years on, it is now time to examine the results, which are crucial for projecting future levels of the disease in cattle, and which have implications for humans.

What Dr Gore asks, is the evidence for excluding cattle under 30 months from the new de-boning and offal provision, when "some bovines under 30 months are certainly infected"?

But where wild horses have failed in the past, yesterday mad cows succeeded. After all the average Labour member's only contact with livestock is the local city farm, usually comprising three old goats, a gaggle of bad-tempered geese and a sow called

Arthur.

So Opposition MPs mustered instead to represent that significant section of the electorate which depends on eating food for its survival.

That agriculture is a priority for Tories is reflected in the calibre of their ministerial team. The brilliant but choleric Douglas Hogg, with his strange forehead (two odd



Hanging in the balance: A BSE-infected cow is prepared for burning at a government-registered incineration plant near Cambridge. Photograph: Brian Harris

Scientist demands action to stop 'Russian roulette'

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

Public Policy Editor

Urgent action to improve the study of the disease pattern of BSE in cattle and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans is needed, a leading biostatistician said yesterday.

Britain has been playing "Russian roulette with no information on the odds", by allowing beef to be consumed from farms where cases of BSE have occurred, said Sheila Gore, a senior statistician at the Medical Research Council's Biostatistics Unit in Cambridge.

The prevalence of infected cattle by age has not been been monitored by the random examination of cattle brains after slaughter, and any cull strategy must include such studies to establish the prevalence of BSE.

"We must do that, rather than just burn the information," Dr Gore said. "That was particularly important, given that more than half the infected cattle reported in 1995 were born after 1988 when an infected feed was imposed in 1988."

In a leading article in the *British Medical Journal*, Dr Gore said there is "the strongest case" for random pathology on slaughtered cattle, to establish what proportion are affected at what age and provide projections for the disease in animals.

Much more detailed information about the 10 human cases of CJD - exactly when they occurred and at what age - must be published, to allow the "doubling time" of the epidemic to be established.

The CJD Surveillance Unit, set up in 1990, has fulfilled its

RESEARCH

remit "spectacularly and speedily" by identifying the 10 cases which led to last week's action, she says.

But the quality of epidemiological data being collected is nowhere near as good as that which Britain established for Aids and HIV. Now that the issue has become a public health rather than agricultural problem, the "signal failure" to provide good epidemiology must be remedied. That would allow better projections of the risks and the likely course of the two diseases.

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vertical creases run parallel to his hairline, making it look as though the back and sides of his head have been added quite recently) and small face, has held his notorious temper in check for an entire crisis now.

His second-in-command, Angela Browning, has sensible short hair with sensible voice and manner to match, and is reassuringly broad in the beam. There are many more like her leading girls in choruses of "The Queen's Stores" around sheepfolds all over southern England.

Labor's team is not a success.

Hogg's shadow, Gavin Strang, seems assailed with self-doubt and hesitation as if continually asking himself why Labour should have an agriculture spokesman at

all. As with many in public life, the lower his confidence, the higher his voice becomes.

When he urged Labour's carefully thought-out eight-point programme on BSE upon Mr Hogg, it reached a dog-whistle pitch.

But the truth is that Labour is not really a big part of this business. Especially now that the focus is shifting to Europe, at whom Tony Blair cast the first brick.

"The biggest problem imposed upon our food industry comes from the European Commission" he declared. Angela Browning agreed, referring to the "disgraceful decision of the scientists of Europe, based not on the science". On The Science, as I suspect ministers now think of

it. In response to Nick Baden, she contrasted European practice with our own.

"In this country we take decisions based on The Science. In Europe they failed to do so." The implication was that our science is not up to scratch.

Nicholas Winterton (Congleton) went further. What was being done to "keep pillaging Spanish fishermen out of our waters? What's sauce for the gander?"

David Amess (Basildon) turned to fish: "These fishermen are fed up with being allowed to catch only codlings, while the rest of Europe are allowed to catch whoppers".

David Amess (Basildon)

Voodoo casts its spell over The Science



DAVID AARONOVITCH

Arthur.

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Minister bows to grammar-school zeal

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

All schools could be offered the chance to become fully selective in a White Paper to be published in June, the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, said yesterday.

In an apparent climbdown in the face of pressure from the Prime Minister, Mrs Shephard said that the move could mean a new grammar school in every town. John Major wants to distinguish clearly between the

Conservatives' education policy and Labour's, and his policy unit is keen to see the setting up of new, privately backed grammar schools.

Mrs Shephard denied rumours that there had been any rift between herself and Mr Major, but leaders of the teachers' unions claimed she had clearly been "whipped into line".

In a speech at the Institute of Education in London yesterday, she said she had no particular figure in mind for the number of new grammar schools she want-

pupils which each school could select.

The Government has already raised the limit from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, but speaking after yesterday's lecture, Mrs Shephard said a 100 per cent limit was a possibility.

In a consultation on the 15 per cent limit, only 15 out of 1,500 organisations consulted said that they were in favour.

Ruling out a return to the old 11-plus system of selection, she said she had no particular figure in mind for the number of new grammar schools she want-

ed to see. "We don't want to impose uniformity. We want schools to build on their own strengths. We do want to see more diversity and more selection if that's what parents and schools want," she said.

She and the Prime Minister were completely in agreement on the matter, she added, referring to newspaper speculation about a split. "There is no rift between us. It really has been a ludicrous period in our lives," she said.

This summer's White Paper

will propose an expansion of local management, which already gives schools control of between 85 per cent and 95 per cent of their budgets. It will also look at ways of encouraging more schools to opt out.

Shephard said that the Secretary of State had been forced by Downing Street to take the line.

"I can't believe for one moment that she is supporting the line that every city and town should have a grammar school.

"If the Government is trying to ensure that there is clear blue water between it and the Labour Party, I don't believe the

vast majority of parents will cast their vote on the basis of which party is prepared to support a greater amount of selection," he said.

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "The Secretary of State has today demonstrated the Prime Minister's infinite capacity for making things worse. Mrs Shephard is about to plunge the entire school admission system in this country into utter chaos by reintroducing selection."



Feminist fury at academic's 'betrayal'

REBECCA FOWLER

A female academic has infuriated feminists with her controversial claim that women are still happy for their place to be in the home, surrounded by housework, while their male counterparts pursue high-powered careers.

Dr Catherine Hakim, a senior research fellow at the London School of Economics, claims that only one in three women are totally career-minded, one third do not want to work at all, and the rest try to combine both while believing domestic chores are mainly their responsibility.

In an unprecedented retaliation, a group of 11 eminent academics have signed a statement of protest. Dr Hakim has also been accused of failing to support her theories with research and not taking into account economic influences.

But in a scathing response to her critics, Dr Hakim accuses them of ignoring differences in attitudes among women, many of whom she says have been let down by feminism. Defending her views in the *Journal of Sociology*, she claims that feminists have created "misleading 'myths'", with a disproportionate focus on the needs of career women rather than housewives.

In her paper, entitled *Five Myths on Women's Employment*, Dr Hakim said most women believed in separate roles in marriage, with the man mainly responsible for bread-winning, and the wife tending the home.

She said: "The unpalatable

truth is that a substantial proportion of women still accept the sexual division of labour, which sees homemaking as women's principal activity, and income-earning as men's principal activity in life."

Dr Hakim also said that there was no evidence that women with better educations and higher-paid jobs felt differently. She added: "If anything, the opposite is the case, as women can afford to choose between competing lifestyles."

In her own defence in the journal she said that studies across Europe suggested women had been forced into two groups, the career-minded or "grateful slaves". Dr Hakim said: "Some people believe I am being anti-feminist... all I am saying is that not every woman feels the same way."

Since she published her pronouncements, Dr Hakim has been accused of betraying the fight for equality for women. Some feminists have refused to talk to her.



Giant step: Model-maker Peter Roberts puts a final touch to a London scene at Legoland Windsor, which opens today. Photograph: Philip Meech

Woman broker wins £81,000 for victimisation

A City broker was awarded record compensation of £81,000 yesterday after suffering eight years of sexist victimisation from her Japanese bosses.

Helen Bamber, 33, said she felt vindicated and claimed it was "a day of shame" for international investment bank Fuji. An industrial tribunal launched a scathing attack on the bank, the third largest in the world, for trying to intimidate her and ruin her reputation.

Miss Bamber, of Hampstead, north London, said she suffered continually on the grounds of her sex, being paid £43,000 a year as a Euro-bond dealer while a male colleague received £170,000. She won her claim for sexual discrimination last year but returned to the tribunal after failing to agree compensation and damages.

Tribunal chairman Ian Lamb accused the bank of showing "malevolence, spite, malice and

arrogance intended to insult and cause pain to the applicant".

Miss Bamber told the hearing Fuji still bore a grudge against her and tried to blacken her name with her new employers, a British bank in the City, by sending a letter about her case to the chief executive. Mr Lamb said: "The conduct of the respondent in this case is off the known scale of aggravated damages... this is an exceptional case which justifies

an exceptional award." He criticised Fuji's deputy managing director, Michael Cole, who represented the bank and attacked Miss Bamber's integrity by accusing her of conspiring with her representative and boyfriend, Cameron McNeill, to extort money from the company. "The two aspects to the counter attack were wholly unfounded and we rejected the theory," Mr Lamb said.

Miss Bamber was given £24,000 for future loss of earnings and a further £20,000 for loss of earnings at Fuji up until April 1994, when she left. She received £12,000 for her difference in salary within the two years since she worked there, £20,000 for aggravated damages and £5,000 for injury to her feelings. With interest the final figure could top £100,000.

Miss Bamber joined Fuji International Finance as a graduate trainee in 1986 and was

consistently praised for her work and called "one of their key sales executives" after earning the company hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. But she claimed on one occasion director Takashi Yoshida told her to resign after she spurned his sexual advances during a business trip.

Mr Cole had earlier accused Mr McNeill of cooking up the sexual allegations to "add spice" to his girlfriend's claims.

Judge Richard Haverty QC, sitting as a High Court Official Referee, held there was no justification for the fire officer in charge to depart from the principle that sprinklers should be kept running until a fire was completely under control. He said the decision was "a bad blunder".

The judge rejected an argument by the fire brigade that it owed no legal duty to the owners of the building and, like the police, was immune from being sued as a matter of public policy.

Jubilant: Helen Bamber was victim of 'spite and malice'

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4 news

Murder trial halted by judge

A murder trial was halted and the jury discharged yesterday to allow the defence to investigate new information.

Marcel Williams, 32, of Old Trafford, Manchester, was on trial at Liverpool Crown Court accused of shooting dead a man who was flyposting notices, and wounding his partner.

The court was told that new information had been provided to Mr Williams's QC, Michael Mansfield, and he wished to pursue it.

Mr Justice Smedley said it was impossible for the four-day trial to continue. "It is not the kind of investigation that can be done in a day, so very regrettably I am going to have to discharge you," he told the jury.

Mr Williams denies murdering Chris Horrox, 30, and attempting to murder his business partner, Jimmy Carr, 46. Mr Carr and Mr Horrox were out flyposting on the night of 2 May 1994 when Mr Carr was hit by four bullets and Mr Horrox was shot through the head.

Mr Carr has told the court that he and Mr Horrox were sticking up posters in Manchester when they were shot by Mr Williams. Mr Carr said that after being shot, he pretended to be dead. He said he was shot twice more and then heard Mr Williams shoot Mr Horrox.

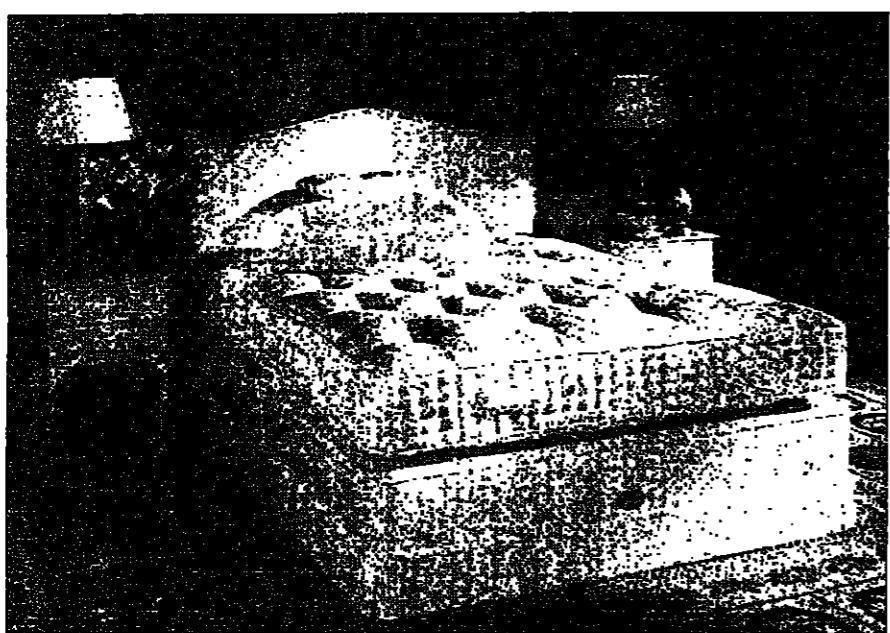
Mr Williams, who claims he was "set up" and was nowhere near the scene of the shooting, was further remanded in custody until Monday.



Virgin canvas: Visitors to the new Gallery of Modern Art in Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow, for its opening ceremony yesterday. The collection is open to the public from tomorrow

Photograph: Paul Reid

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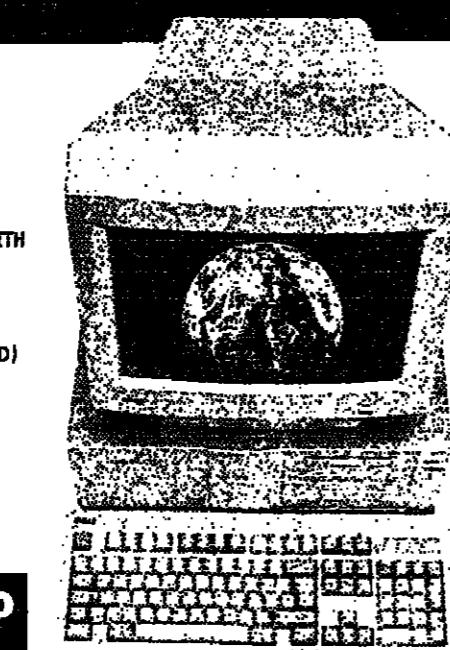
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Minister quits over baptism

A Methodist minister yesterday announced he had resigned because of an "amicable" disagreement with his church over the issue of baptism.

The Rev Terry Pottle, based at Amble, Northumberland, said he no longer wished to perform the ceremony – which placed him in direct contradiction of church policy.

"The position is very simple: the Methodist Church maintains a position of baptising babies as a sign of God's love and offer of grace to all people," said Mr Pottle, who serves six churches and is also Methodist chaplain to Acklington Prison.

"From my point of view this was not the practice of the early church, neither is it taught in the Bible. The Methodist Church requires ministers to baptise infants where appropriate. I feel that I can no longer, in good conscience, do this and have therefore tendered my resignation, which has been accepted by the President of the Methodist Conference.

"Obviously, I am very sad to be going but as a minister I feel I have to maintain my own integrity if I am to preach the Bible to other people. But it is an amicable parting under the circumstances." Mr Pottle, 45, and his wife, Marie, are due to leave their tied home in August after four years of service.

Mr Pottle said that if anyone approached him asking for a baptism he referred them to another minister who would do it, which meant the church was not turning anyone away.

He said he wished to continue as a minister and was now considering approaching other Christian denominations which did not carry out baptisms.

The Rev Dr Stephen Moseley, the Methodist Co-ordinating Secretary of Church Life, based in London, said: "We do have a clear policy about what we expect of our ministers as regards infant baptism: it is that they are required to be willing to baptise them in appropriate circumstances."

"Therefore, it is inevitable a minister who no longer feels willing to undertake baby baptism will have to resign."

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Electronic road tolls run into traffic

JAMES CUSICK

Plans for the introduction of electronic road tolls on Britain's motorways, regarded as crucial to the Government's future transport strategy, are facing further serious delay after the withdrawal of half the private-sector companies involved in developing the toll technology.

Charges for using the 2,000-mile motorway network were

being planned for introduction in 1998 with the Government banking on receiving £700m from the toll charges. Electronic tolling would also have provided the key to changing motorists on new roads financed by the private sector.

A year ago the Department of Transport was trumpeting Britain's potential world lead in electronic toll technology. Trials were scheduled to begin this

summer on the M3 with eight leading firms involved in designing a national toll system.

However the timetable slipped back 18 months. Now, with the withdrawal of the three firms, there is even more delay.

Although the DoT said the withdrawals were for "commercial" reasons, the project has allegedly been dogged by disillusionment over government pricing policy arguments.

The continuing delays have put the idea of selling toll charges to the public, "per-

haps close to the coming general election", according to Whitehall sources. There has been growing concern in some government circles that descriptions of the electronic road charges as a potential "poll tax on wheels" were justified. One study, compiled by the Centre for Policy Studies, concluded that there was "a real risk of civil disobedience" if any system was not completely accurate.

The DoT confirmed yesterday that it "would be unlikely for the motorway trials to commence this year". A report in today's *Economist* suggested the entire project was on the verge of collapse.

There obviously has to be a balance struck, but the pendulum has to swing back. There is too little attention paid to the needs of relatives and carers."

In neither of the recent cases, she said, would the package

of new measures announced by Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, help.

It involved a £95m programme, far from all of which was new money, which included new 24-hour nursed homes to provide asylum for the most disturbed schizophrenics and others who need the "long stay" care which used to be provided in hospital. But divided up between health authorities, she said, that amounted to around £50,000 each – barely enough to run just one of the 20-bed units each, even if the capital to build them was found.

"What are they meant to do with all the rest of the people who don't qualify for these few facilities?" she asked. "These measures simply do not match the scale of the problem."

Care in the community: Policy changes after double death

'Agencies failed to provide for schizophrenic'

GLENDA COOPER

A schizophrenic who killed his mother and then committed suicide was let down by "inadequate" care in the community, an inquiry said yesterday.

Last April Robert Viner, 42, a civil engineering graduate who had lived in the community since 1982, battered his mother, Muriel, to death at her home in Corfe Mullen, Dorset, with an exercise weight and then killed himself with an overdose.

The report came the day after the inquiry into the care and treatment of the schizophrenic triple killer, Jason Mitchell, called for a shake-up in mental health laws.

While the independent inquiry found that the Viners' deaths could not have been predicted, it noted that there had been no consideration of the needs of Mrs Viner, 76, who had cared for her son for 15 years.

This was exacerbated by the "deficiencies" in communication between health, social services and housing authorities who failed to address the needs both of her and son.

At the inquest last August, which recorded a verdict of unlawful killing on Mrs Viner, and an open verdict on her son, it was heard that Mrs Viner felt her son should move into sheltered accommodation.

Three days before the deaths a community psychiatric nurse had found Mrs Viner "at the end of her tether" with her son and Colin Greaves, her son-in-law, also told the inquest she had been so concerned for her safety that she had hidden all the kitchen knives.

Mr Viner was not included in the Care Programme Approach, under which the mentally ill are given a key worker. Dorset Health Commission said

it had now extended the programme so that it included all patients in contact with specialist mental health services.

The chairman of the inquiry, Anthony Harbour, said: "We recognize that the professionals involved in Robert Viner's and Muriel Viner's care worked with compassion and dedication. Nevertheless we considered this case highlights the inadequacy of the limited implementation of the care programme approach which was adopted in Dorset."

The report also found a lack of communication between agencies which "contributed to a failure to fully identify the needs of either Robert or Muriel Viner and to provide a comprehensive care plan".

The health commission said it was implementing an action plan to ensure the 36 recommendations made by the inquiry were swiftly implemented and £750,000 had been set aside to develop support for carers in Dorset and a Carers' Charter had been introduced.

More community psychiatric nurses and seven new social worker posts have been created to support the work of mental health teams with regular monitoring of those under the care programme approach.

The chief executive of the commission, Ian Carruthers, said: "The deaths of Robert and Muriel Viner were a regrettable tragedy... Important changes in service provision have already been made in the light of an internal inquiry into the deaths. In addition the agencies involved... have signed up to an action plan to ensure the inquiry team's recommendations are carried forward."

Families 'need more say'

NICHOLAS TIMMINS

Public Policy Editor

The balance between the rights of the mentally ill and those of their families needs to tip back in favour of the families, Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of the mental health charity Sane, said yesterday in the wake of the Jason Mitchell and Robert Viner reports.

At the same time, she warned, the Government's recently announced package to improve help for the mentally ill remained completely inadequate.

Both the Mitchell and Viner cases – in which one killed his father and the other his mother – showed that relatives were not listened to and failed to get the support they needed, she

said. "The professionals, as usual, took the view that they would wait until something worse happened," she said.

The problem, she said, was that psychiatrists, nurses and social workers all acted as advocates for the patient, "but there is no one to act as advocate for the families."

There are people working for the rights and fulfilment of the person who is mentally ill, but not for the rights of families, and particularly of elderly parents. And there is a conflict of interest between the two.

There obviously has to be a balance struck, but the pendulum has to swing back. There is too little attention paid to the needs of relatives and carers."

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of new measures announced by Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, help.

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You will still be able to enjoy the BK Chicken Flamer™, Chicken Royale, Spicy Beanburger and all other items on our menu. Naturally, should circumstances change in any way, we will keep you informed through the press and our restaurants.



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Grand concepts: Rob Lee yesterday working on his sculpture of William Blake's God, destined to join Atlas, Medusa and three other figures at the Natural History Museum's new Earth Galleries which open in South Kensington, London, in July

Photograph: José McLeese

Churchill papers purchase was 'vital'

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Media Correspondent

Lord Rothschild, chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, yesterday defended himself against charges of squandering lottery money on the £15m purchase of the Churchill archive.

The decision last May to buy the papers from the war leader's family, including the Tory MP Winston Churchill, was one of the first grants by the NHMF, which distributes lottery money for heritage projects.

Lord Rothschild came under attack from some members of the Heritage Select Committee.

Joe Ashton, Labour MP for Bassettlaw, said that there had been some doubt whether Winston Churchill, Sir Winston's grandson, was the legal owner of the archive.

"Surely people who spent money on lottery tickets would not have wanted their money to end up in the pockets of Chur-

chill's grandson?" he asked. "There are things in national life which are somehow sacred icons in this country. We helped save the first letters Nelson wrote with his left hand and Wellington's dispatch from the Battle of Waterloo." Lord Rothschild replied.

The select committee dis-

agreed about the value of the purchase. John Maxton, Labour MP for Cathcart, told Lord Rothschild: "You were right to spend that money on acquiring the Churchill papers, but you never should have had to. It was a disgrace that any member of the family should have demanded money for the papers."

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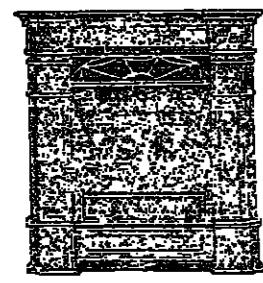
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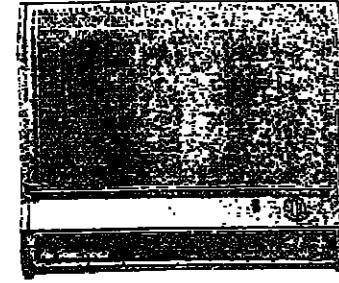
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Otters' designer homes mark happy ending to riverbank tale



Open house: One of the riverside apartments built to entice otters back to the River Kennet. Photographs: John Voos

ROS WYNNE-JONES

Designer riverside apartments are being built for otters to entice the animals back to the Thames region after pollution forced them to flee in the 1950s.

The National Rivers Authority together with wildlife conservation groups in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, are working with the local water authority to re-establish the otters.

"Otters vanished from the area in the late 1950s and 1960s because of excessive river pollution," said a spokesman for Thames Water. "We don't want to artificially re-introduce otters into the area, so we are building homes for them to find."

Each new otter holt consists of an underground chamber measuring two metres square with access, via pipes, to the river and nearby land. The chambers are divided into "rooms" with concrete slabs.

The locations of the hols are being kept secret to protect the otters' privacy, but all are along the river Kennet in Wiltshire. The initiative follows a similar scheme along the upper Thames last year.



Heavenly creatures: Otters were forced away from rivers by pollution in the 1950s

The sites were selected by Mark Satinet, the Kennet Otter Habitat Project Officer with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. "Otters were once found throughout England," he said, "but pollution and habitat loss have caused their numbers to decline rapidly. These new apartments are ideal ... as otters are secretive creatures and like dark, quiet places near water." Otters were recently seen in the area for the first time in 20 years. John Lawrence, Thames Water's waste manager, said: "We want to do all we can to make life easier for the otters now they are returning to the region's rivers." Thames Water has invested £500m in improving sewage works in the region and plans to spend another £300m by the turn of the century. "Our investment at sewage treatment works has paved the way for their return ... We hope that new riverside pads will make them feel even more welcome."

Police study guide to catch serial offenders

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

A guide to catching serial killers, multiple rapists, kidnappers and armed robbers, is to be issued to senior detectives for the first time. The confidential manual also supports the use of offender profiling in major investigations and gives a list of recommended psychologists who can be used in trying to track down serial offenders.

Police officers believe that new investigative techniques and modern technology such as DNA sampling will reveal that there are many more serial murderers and rapists than previously thought. They also predict that many major crimes, previously believed to have been one-offs, are linked.

The handbook is being drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers following a number of serial crimes, including the murders carried out by Frederick and Rosemary West, and the case of Michael Sains, who was jailed for life in 1993 for the murder of Julie Dart and the kidnapping of the estate agent Stephanie Slater. The police believe important lessons have been learnt from these types of linked cases. They also want to draw together all the forensic and technological advances of the past decade.

Until this publication the police had not produced their own guide to catching major criminals. In 1983, following the conviction of the Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe, the Home Office produced a cir-

cular called *The Investigation of a Series of Major Crimes*, but that is now considered out of date and inadequate.

Among the subjects covered in the book are the latest interview techniques, the use of computerised incident rooms, how to manage a major investigation, training, how the media can help in investigations, and what help detectives can get from the newly-established Crime Faculty.

The book, which will only be available to senior investigating officers, says offender profiling – the technique of predicting the likely characteristics of an offender – can be a useful tool in major investigations. There have been remarkable successes using such techniques. John Duffy, the so-called Railway Murderer who was convicted of rapes and murders near railway lines in London in 1986, was caught as a direct result of a profile compiled by Professor David Canter.

The manual follows a year-long inquiry by a working party of Acpol's crime committee, headed by Detective Chief Superintendent Michael Jenkins, of the West Midlands police.

Inspector Clive Parsons, the group's secretary, said: "You have got to expect that we are going to find more links between serious crimes in the future. We are trying to get officers not to treat major crimes as one-offs – we want people to consider links with other incidents. The police now acknowledge that they should be looking for over-all patterns of crime."

IN TOMORROW'S THE INDEPENDENT



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news

Railtrack warned over Forth Bridge repairs

Safety survey: Checks reveal 'significant deterioration'

Rail chiefs were yesterday ordered to improve maintenance of the 100-year-old Forth Bridge, near Edinburgh.

The Health and Safety Executive said the mile-long bridge - which carries 1,000 trains a week over the river Forth - was still safe, but Railtrack needed to repair existing damage and step up maintenance procedures.

The assessment by the HSE was prompted by public concern about the condition of the bridge which has recently been shedding large flakes of red paint.

The report said: "The bridge is over 100 years old and some deterioration in its condition is to be expected. However, the assessment has indicated that over many years the maintenance system has not been robust enough to prevent significant deterioration in certain areas of the bridge."

Engineers from HM Railway Inspectorate carried out a survey of the condition of the bridge - a hazard analysis and structural study. In their judgement the bridge was safe in its current condition to carry Railtrack's present loading.

Although the bridge has been allowed to deteriorate, its structural integrity was not compromised. Its carrying capacity in its present condition complied with modern standards of safe design for bridges. The existing maintenance regime

needed improvement if deterioration was to be stopped and potential structural problems in the future were to be avoided, the study said.

Sam Robertson, chief inspecting officer of railways, said he was not alarmed by the survey, but added: "We were dissatisfied, disappointed, concerned to find that parts of the bridge had been allowed to deteriorate with no apparent maintenance over long periods and this was confirmed because of a complete lack of records."

He explained that when Railtrack took responsibility for the bridge two years ago they found big gaps in maintenance records.

"Clearly it indicates a lack of care on the part of people responsible at the time."

Railtrack now has to meet several requirements including completing an overall survey of the bridge's condition, and establishing a full understanding of how the bridge and its particular bearings - which allow contraction and expansion - were designed to work.

It will also have to complete a structural assessment of the bridge and prepare an action plan for restoration and repairs. Railtrack will also have to prepare a maintenance plan to cover the future upkeep and monitoring of the bridge's condition.

Mr Robertson said that the HSE had given Railtrack formal

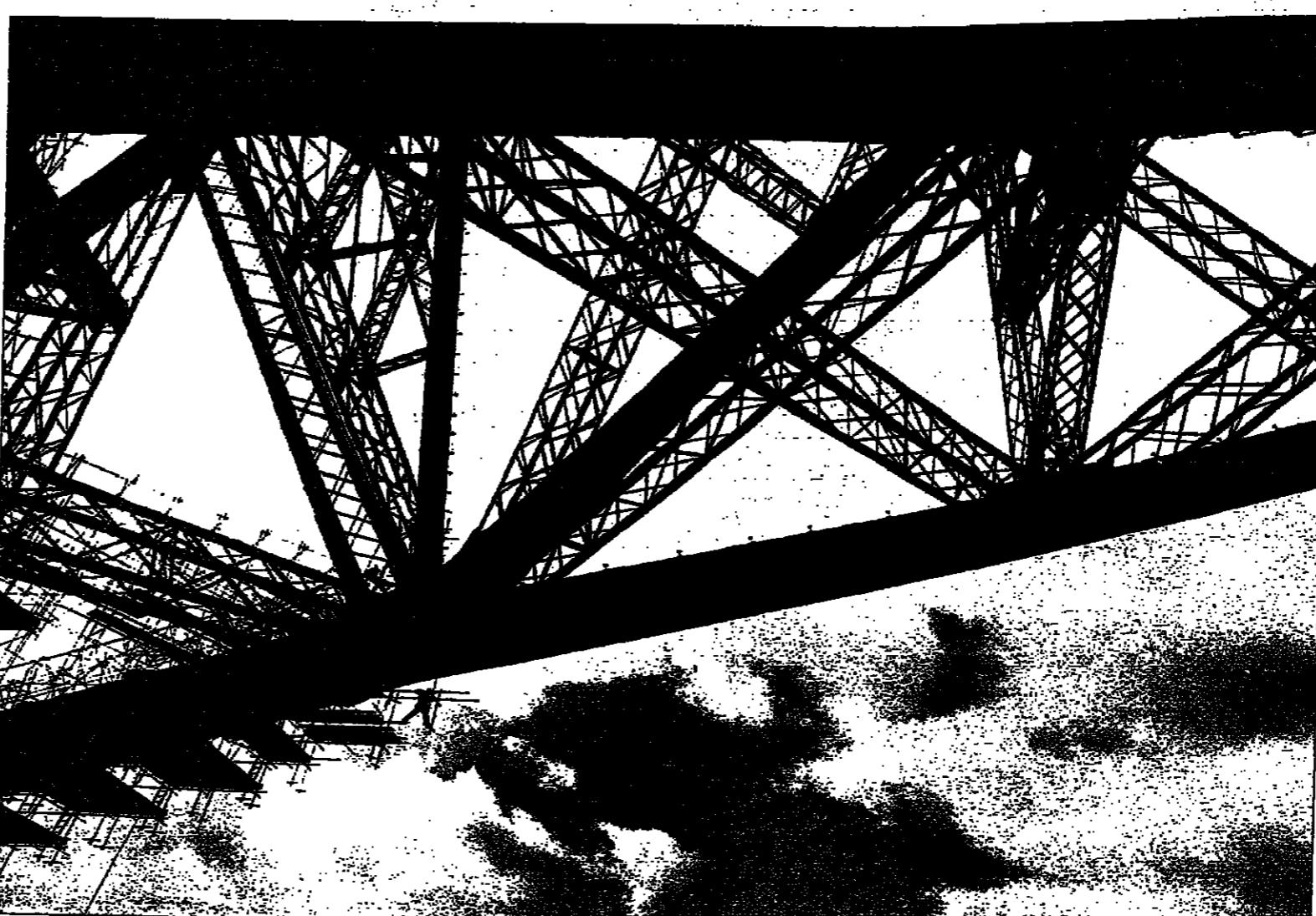
notice of its intention to issue improvement notices in respect of these items.

The report said some secondary sections, steel angle straps, were so rusted they were broken through and had to be replaced. Some parts of the bridge had no paint or coating other than the oil treatment applied when it was built. "A significant backlog of painting work needs to be addressed. Between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of the bridge required some sort of coating."

The survey showed the paint applied over the last 100 years was no longer providing adequate protection to the steel underneath. "In recent years, grit-blasting has been used to remove old paint, but this had also removed the original oil and coating from the steel which gave a degree of protection."

Railtrack said it would be spending more than £3m on the bridge in the next financial year. A spokesman said: "We too have carried out an in-depth analysis on the carrying capacity and condition of the bridge and we are preparing a maintenance plan which will preserve the bridge indefinitely."

The statement added: "Railtrack welcomes the Health and Safety Executive's report and its acknowledgment that the Forth Bridge is safe, its integrity is not compromised and that it complies with modern standards of safe design."



Showing its age: Maintenance of the Forth Bridge needs to be stepped up if structural problems are to be avoided. Photograph: Colin McPherson

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£220,000 award for victim of police assault

A hairdresser was yesterday awarded £220,000 damages after a jury decided that he was assaulted by police and wrongfully arrested.

Kenneth Shu, 32, claimed he was attacked by police when he refused to let them into his London home without a warrant in July 1992.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed the award, which Mr Shu's lawyer said was a record payout, but a spokeswoman said: "We are a spokeperson appeal against the size of the award rather than the verdict." She was unable to say if an investigation is to be set up into the conduct of officers involved.

Police had gone to his home over a dispute involving a tenant. He was arrested after refusing to allow the officers in.

As Mr Shu celebrated his victory today, his lawyer, Sidq Khan, said: "My client was grabbed by the arms which were twisted up his back and then handcuffed behind him. He was also held in a neck lock which is now illegal and not taught to police officers.

They punched and kicked him in the van and he was kicked in the kidneys. Another policeman used his back as a footstool and the driver turned round and insulted him verbally, saying he had got no more than he deserved. The charge officer told him, 'I've never arrested a Chink before'.

When he was released at 11pm that night they threw him into the street in just jeans and flip-flops. He had to walk two miles home, because they refused to let him call a taxi."

PC found guilty of karate attack

A Scottish police officer was yesterday found guilty of launching an unprovoked karate attack on a teenager being held in police cells.

The hearing at Aberdeen Sheriff Court was told how Constable Colin Leask, a 29-year-old martial arts expert, kicked 19-year-old Kevin McGeachy in the groin before launching a flurry of blows to the suspect's head and finally throwing him to the ground.

Leask, who took up karate and martial arts when he was 12-years-old, had denied the assault which took place last July.

The court was told that Mr McGeachy had been arrested for drug offences and taken to Grampian police headquarters in Aberdeen for a strip search.

Convicted killer rejects parole in denial of guilt

HEATHER MILLIS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A man jailed for a killing he says he did not commit, will today refuse to leave Long Lartin jail at the end of his prison sentence in a protestation of his innocence.

Patrick McCann – jailed largely on the evidence of his own family – says he will decline to leave the cell where he has served six years of a 10-year sentence, until Michael Howard, the Home Secretary refers his case back to the Court of Appeal or his innocence is established.

The move presents the Prison Service coping with overcrowded jails with an unusual problem. Usually those refusing to leave do so, because of personal reasons – fear, agoraphobia, difficulties at home – and counselling normally works. A spokeswoman said yesterday: "We would treat a protest in the same way and hope that solves the problem."

McCann, 40, was jailed in June, 1990 for the manslaughter of Richard Holdsworth, in Cardiff after a drunken binge with his family. He was accused of suffocating Holdsworth and robbing him of cash. A previous trial had to be abandoned after a jury could not agree a verdict.

But according to McCann's supporters, the case against him was always weak.

There was evidence suggesting that Mr Holdsworth may have died of natural causes.

Further, there was no forensic

they did. The past three-and-a-half years have been like hell for me. Every time I thought about what happened, it was just anger.

Doctors at London's King's College Hospital found that Mr Shu had extensive bruising to his back and kidneys. He was passing blood and decided to make a formal complaint to the Police Complaints Commission. Although a police surgeon confirmed the injuries, the complaint was rejected and the hairdresser then decided to sue.

Following a four-day civil hearing at Central London County Court, the jury decided in Mr Shu's favour and awarded him £20,000 in compensatory damages and £200,000 in exemplary damages.

A statement on behalf of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Paul Condon said: "We believe the award in this case to be excessive and we are looking to appeal against the size of the award but not the verdict." An application to appeal was lodged with the court almost at once. A police spokeswoman added: "No disciplinary action has or will be taken against the officers involved and none is planned. They continue with their normal duties."

The 32-year-old hairdresser who arrived in London from Hong Kong nine years ago, later said: "Finally I've got justice. I'm really happy with what the jury have done. I feel terribly relieved."

He said: "I still don't understand why the police did what

Comet Hyakutake comes in range for a close-up – 9 million miles from earth



A long tail: The comet Hyakutake in a photograph taken with a Wide Field Planetary Camera on board the Nasa Hubble Telescope, in orbit round the earth, on Monday when the comet was 9.3 million miles distant. The image covers an area 2,070 miles across

Photograph: Nasa

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ESTATE

news

GPs told to ask more for non-core services

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

Family doctors are being told they should stop providing care for patients in nursing and residential homes and for highly dependent patients living at home unless they are paid extra for the work.

A document being sent to all 35,000 family doctors says they should also decline to advise health authorities on purchasing health care, should not take blood, treat minor injuries, remove stitches after operations, provide home care after day case surgery, prescribe a range of expensive and hi-tech drugs, undertake vasectomies, or treat piles by injection without a contract to do so from health authorities or other purchasers.

The work – all of which is already undertaken by at least some GPs – should not be undertaken without extra pay-

ment, according to the British Medical Association's family doctors' committee. The advice comes in a paper which will become BMA policy if approved at a conference in June.

The aim is to provide a restricted definition of what the existing GPs' "core contract" is ahead of negotiations with Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, over a new deal aimed at shifting into general practice more work traditionally done in hospitals.

GPs' leaders complain that significant amounts of hospital work – such as longer term care of the elderly – have already slid into general practice with, in most cases, no extra payment. Defining a "core contract" before discussion on the transfer of other work – such as minor injury centres, care for the mentally ill and more complex drug and diagnostic treatments – is "crucial" according to Dr Ian

Bogle, chairman of the BMA's general medical services committee, which is warning of falling recruitment to general practice and low morale.

The BMA cannot instruct GPs to stop doing the work – but its advice is that if "health authorities do not wish to purchase this work, then it won't be done", Dr Bogle says.

For providing some items – care in nursing and residential homes, or hormone implants – GPs' leaders may seek national negotiations. Other items from the list include mentally ill patients under supervision orders, varicose-vein litigation and screening for diabetes, induced eye disease other than glaucoma, a range of more serious minor surgical procedures.

The paper's recommendations provide "a weapon for GPs to use with their health authorities in local negotiations". A spokesman for the

BMA said, "It is issuing the guidance unilaterally, not planning to negotiate with the Department of Health over it."

Family doctors choosing to provide the "non-core" services should be convinced they are financially attractive and that they offer a reasonable profit margin. "The end result should be an increase in GP income," the document says.

Defining the "core" service enables GPs to say no to new work, but yes "if they consider it to be appropriate and if sufficient resources are available."

The document concedes there are risks in attempting to define in a more restrictive way the work of family doctors. GPs' clinical freedom to choose what services patients receive could be reduced, management may take a more intrusive interest in their work and others may compete to provide non-core services.



Sixties sensation: Ball chair designed by Eero Aarnio in 1965 (est. £2,200-£2,800) having an airing in New Bond Street yesterday before auction at Sotheby's sale of post-1930s design on 1 April. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

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Son of Nigerian activist loses asylum appeal

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

A man whose pro-democracy activist father has "disappeared" since being deported to his native Nigeria has failed in his bid at the Court of Appeal to remain in the UK.

Ade Onibioye had claimed his life could be at risk if he too were sent to Nigeria where his father, Abdul, 54, "vanished without trace" following his own forced removal last October. But three judges yesterday upheld the Home Secretary's refusal to grant Mr Onibioye political asylum.

However, in an important asylum test case decision, the judges ruled that, contrary to the Home Office's contention, asylum seekers did have a right to make a second application for refugee status during a single stay in the UK.

Mr Howard had legally and properly exercised his powers in concluding there was no "fresh claim" for asylum. The Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Bingham, sitting with two other judges, refused Mr Onibioye leave to appeal to the House of Lords, but his lawyers will now ask the Law Lords direct to hear the case.

In the mean time the student, who has been in detention at Campsfield, in Oxfordshire, for a year, will not be sent back to Nigeria.

Sir Thomas said Ade Onibioye had relied on his father's disappearance and evidence of civil rights abuses in Nigeria, including the execution last November of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other pro-democracy activists in Nigeria. But he added: "There is, however, no evidence that the applicant's father has been detained, and the Nigeria High Commission has publicly asserted that he has not been detained. It was extremely unlikely that there would be 'officially inspired' persecution of a young man who had not set foot in Nigeria since the age of 11, and who had not pursued any political activity of any kind during his long stay in the UK," he said.

But outside court, Mr Onibioye's sister, Lola, said she was now fearful that her brother and other members of her family could suffer the same fate as her father. "We are being asked by the British Government to prove that our father is safe but we cannot get any evidence out of Nigeria." She said that her mother, Joyce, and two younger sisters now faced deportation.

The Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn said: "The Onibioye campaign has won an important case for every other asylum seeker. But the family is being asked to prove a negative in order to win asylum for Ade."

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MPs seek 'spy master' for intelligence services

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

An all-party committee yesterday clashed with the Prime Minister over the threat to British spies caused by a Russian mole in the American Central Intelligence Agency.

The appointment of a ministerial 'spy master' with responsibility for MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, the Government communications headquarters, was

also raised by members of the committee as a possible solution to past failures properly to disseminate intelligence information around Whitehall.

The Security and Intelligence Committee, chaired by Tom King, former Cabinet minister, warned that British agents' lives could have been lost after secrets were betrayed by Aldrich Ames, a CIA officer, and claimed that ministers had been inadequately briefed.

"We are seriously concerned over the extent and nature of the damage that has been done to British interests by the traitorous activities of the CIA officer Aldrich Ames," said the committee. It was also worried that "taunted" intelligence had been passed to ministers by agents compromised by Ames.

But John Major brushed aside the fears of the committee, which he set up. He said in a letter that after reviewing

the evidence, "damage to the UK was not great" and he was satisfied that ministers "were adequately briefed". The Prime Minister added: "These are serious issues and I look forward to seeing your conclusions following your further investigations into these matters."

The committee complained in its annual report published yesterday that the British intelligence services had launched their own inquiry into the damage caused by the Ames affair in November 1995 - almost two years after his treachery was first exposed.

Archie Hamilton, a former defence minister and a member of the committee, said: "We are concerned that he was an extremely bad agent. He used to get drunk; he fell asleep in the office; he had an expensive car and a large house; nobody checked on this; he merely said his wife was very rich. It does

cause great concern for anyone who has to look at the security organisation."

The committee reported that Ames had identified 13 CIA agents in Russia; nine were executed and three were imprisoned.

"It is vital that all possible

lessons are learnt on the security aspects of this case with the minimum of delay."

The report highlighted a failure in the present ministerial structure to have a proper

overview of the security and intelligence services. The agencies had other responsibilities.

Lord Howe, a former Foreign Secretary, said he had been given an overview of the intelligence and security services for the first time as a member of the committee, although MI6 and GCHQ had reported to him when he was a Cabinet minister.

Mr King said that no minis-

ter, with the exception of the Prime Minister, had an overview of the intelligence information being supplied by MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. In Germany, there was a minister with responsibility for the intelligence and security services.

The Prime Minister promised to improve the dissemination of intelligence information around Whitehall in the wake of the Scott report into the arms-to-Iraq affair.

By-election battle: Labour leader tours seat while launching training policy

Blair plugs in for the campaign to come

JOHN RENTOU

Tony Blair raised the stakes in the Staffordshire South East by-election yesterday by in effect admitting that Labour could not afford to fail to win the seat from the Conservatives.

"This is a very important campaign," he told party workers. "We can't take anything for granted."

The Labour leader, with his eyes increasingly focused on a possible October general election, launched the party's modest but specific training plans in Tamworth, the core of the seat vacated by the death of the Tory MP Sir David Lightbown.

In a dry run for the technology which will dominate the general election, Mr Blair spoke to a news conference in London via a satellite link.

Mr Blair used a computer-aided machine tools workshop in Tamworth as a backdrop for his announcement of a £150 training grant each for one million workers, provided they contribute £25.

Labour has tried to fight the by-election as a government in waiting. Gavin Strang, the shadow agriculture minister, on Wednesday interrupted a

photo-call on a dairy farm in the constituency to telephone Franz Fischler, the European agriculture commissioner, to demand EU assistance for stricken cattle farmers.

But the beef scare has blown apart the Tory strategy for the by-election, which was to build on party unity on Europe and continuing economic good news with their tough, ex-army candidate, Jimmy James.

At the edge-of-town Sainsbury's, it is only the hard-core who are buying beef or voting Tory. One former Tory voter said she would not be voting for Mr James. "They've known about beef for a long time and they must have known it would come out. They hoped they could bluff their way through, but I'm not buying any."

Tamworth is quintessential new Labour territory. A pleasant, prosperous Midlands town surrounded by large Birmingham commuter houses. The people are fed up with the Government and the Labour council, whose leader Brian Jenkins is the party's candidate. Jimmy James is the party's candidate, and has achieved the highest ac-

lade possible - no one has a bad word to say about it.

Labour's dilemma is that it won a similar West Midlands seat, Dudley West, from the Tories with a record post-war swing of 29 per cent in December 1994. Anything less than that could be portrayed as a recovery by the Tories. But even before the beef scare, a Birmingham Evening Mail poll conducted in the street had given Labour 66 per cent, 50 points ahead of the Tories on 16 with the Liberal Democrats third on 13 per cent.

The Liberal Democrats' Jeannette Davy, meanwhile, treats the logically challenged line of admitting her chances are slim - "If we don't win here, we would like to get as many votes as possible" - and that she "would like to see a general election as soon as possible", without endorsing a Labour win as her next-best outcome.

□ Staffordshire South East

1992 general election: D Lightbown (C) 29,180; B Jenkins (Lab) 21,988; G Penlington (Lib Dem) 5,540. Conservative majority 7,192.



Live wire: Labour leader Tony Blair during a satellite link from a Tamworth factory yesterday. Photograph: Steve Hill

Spying makes a comeback as Russia seeks Britain's secrets

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

Increasing numbers of Russian spies are being sent to Britain to obtain information about military, economic and political targets, according to a report published by MI5 yesterday.

The second information booklet issued by the Security Service also states that Irish terrorism is still the single largest threat.

The book is part of the service's attempt to be more open and comes as Dame Stella Rimington hands over her post as Director-General of MI5 to Stephen Lander.

Among a review of MI5's

work it says that although the threat of espionage from the former Soviet Union has greatly diminished, there has been a recent upsurge in spying by Russia and other countries.

The report says: "In the UK, after a period of initial retrenchment following the rise to power of President Yeltsin, both the Russian civilian and military intelligence services have renewed their efforts to post intelligence officers to London."

It adds that the majority of spies are run by foreign handlers based in Britain.

Counter-espionage takes up about a quarter of MI5's efforts. The service employs about

2,000 people and has a budget of £280 million. Fighting international terrorism takes up about a third of its resources and Irish terrorism absorbs 39 per cent down 5 per cent since last year. This trend is expected to be reversed since the breaking of the IRA ceasefire last month.

Under a Bill currently going through Parliament, MI5 will for the first time be allowed to investigate traditional serious crime, such as money laundering. Among some of its other current work is the investigation of attempts by foreign countries to obtain material and expertise for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons from Britain.

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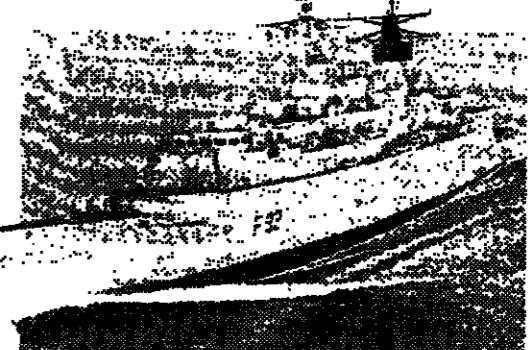
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TURIN CONFERENCE

EMU rift overshadows push for closer union

ANDREW GUMBLE
Turin
IMRE KARACS
Bonn

BUILDING EUROPE

Today's European summit meeting in Turin may be meant to concentrate on overhauling and harmonising the Union's institutions, but a shadow has been cast over the proceedings by deep differences between member states over the increasing creation of a single currency.

The issue symbolises one of the basic difficulties which the Inter-Governmental Conference faces: how to build a European Union which is flexible enough to admit diversity, yet solid enough not to disintegrate. By creating a plan that meant some states would enter monetary union while others would not, the Maastricht treaty also created the germ of a two-speed Europe.

The issue of monetary union, which had lain dormant for some time, returned this week when a Franco-German summit in the south of France laid down plans to create a new currency regime to accommodate countries whose economies were not strong enough to join the single currency at its launch date in 1999.

The proposal, known as EMS 2, has been greeted with scepticism in the countries most likely to be forced to join it, and faces an immediate credibility problem because Britain, which has already opted out of the single currency, wants nothing to do with it.

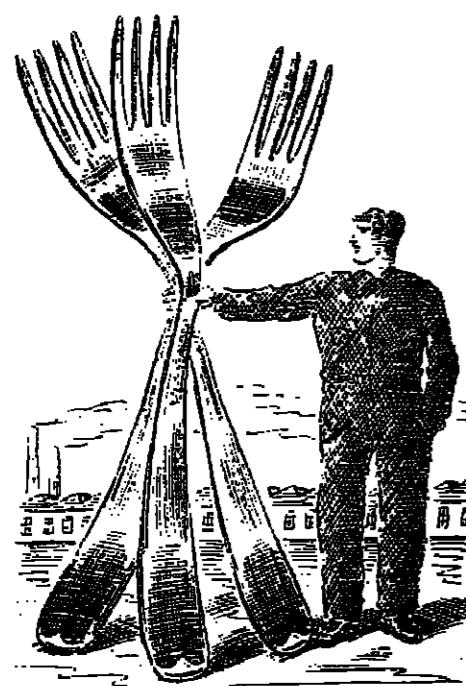
According to a well-placed official banking source, the project may be economically viable but will almost certainly be politically unacceptable unless Britain can be persuaded to take part. Countries such as Italy, which are nowhere near meeting the convergence criteria for monetary union, will need some persuading that the system is in their interests and not just a palliative distinguishing Franco-German domination of the EU.

This is a system that stands no chance of working, the former Italian prime minister and economic expert, Giuliano Amato, said yesterday, querying the wisdom of reviving a currency regime battered to pieces in the financial marketplace in 1992.

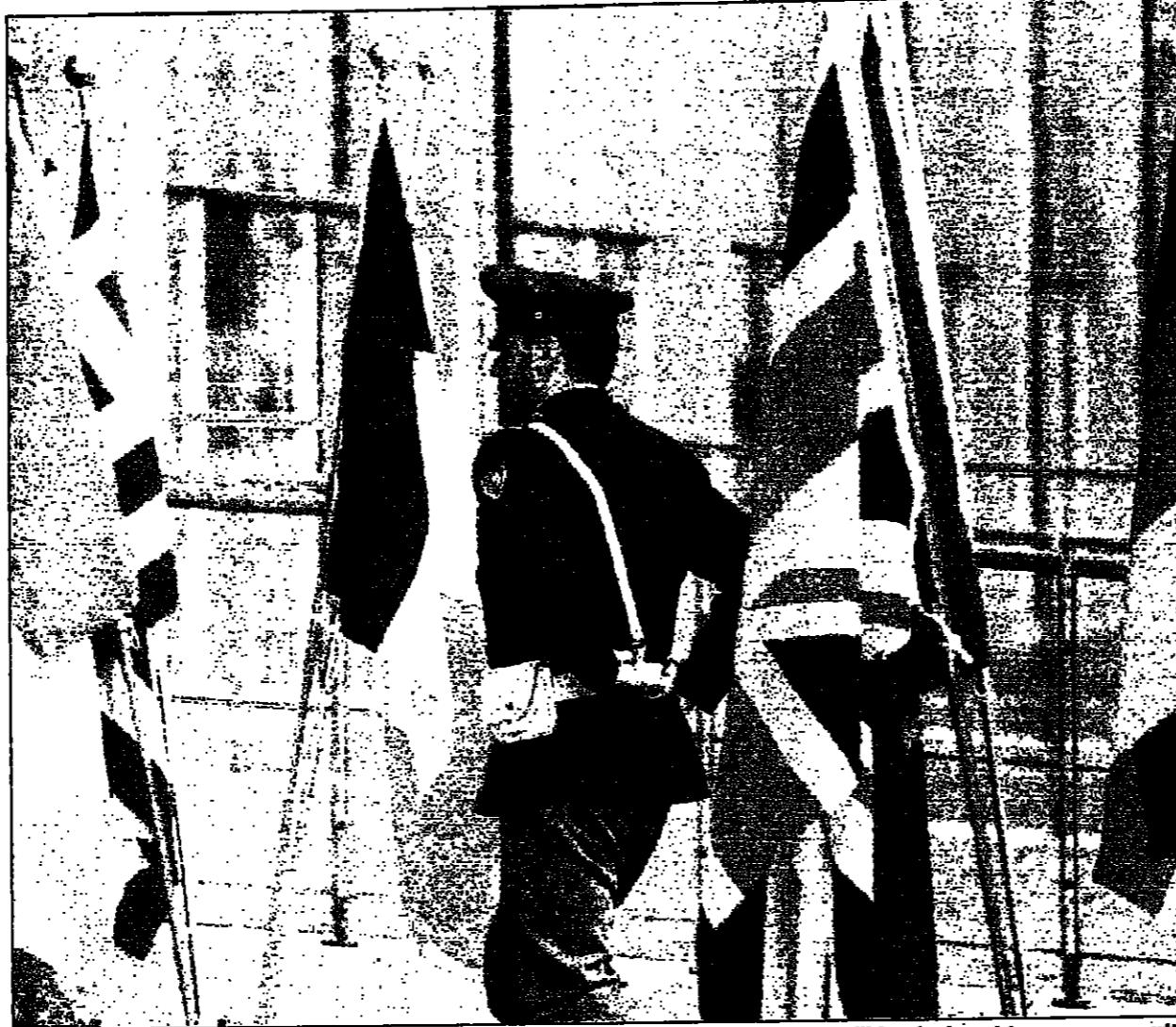
All this indicates that the relationship between Europe's hard core and its outer layer will prove more difficult to handle than anticipated.

Karl Lamers, foreign affairs

What's the connection between Grand Forks and Sheffield?



NORTHWEST KLM



Flag day: A policeman outside the conference centre in Turin. Over 5,000 officers will be deployed to ensure security

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Labour shows sceptical side

NICOLE VEASH

Fifty Labour MPs have called on Tony Blair to rule out a single currency, warning that monetary union would require huge cuts in British jobs and services.

The signed demand is one of the first indications since Mr Blair became party leader of the potential level of unrest if he were to take Britain into a single currency as prime minister. Nearly one in five of the party's MPs supported the "Europe Isn't Working" statement.

Alan Simpson, MP for Nottingham South, said a single currency would lead to high levels of unemployment, and would drag the country into a "bigger hole" without the consent of the British people. "The European agenda should be the people's agenda and not the bankers' agenda. Our campaign is about democracy and not just economics."

Denis Davies, a former Treasury minister and MP for Llanelli, said his party's early European euphoria had ended. And he warned that if Labour won the election, Gordon Brown would have to address single currency factors in his first Budget as Chancellor. "It's something we can't run away from. If we go into government

as a party without a clear view, this issue would dominate right from the beginning," he said.

Signatories to the statement include Diane Abbott, Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone, and Peter Shore.

They claim the cost of introducing the single currency in jobs and services would be equivalent to cutting half of all NHS trusts, or all secondary schools and two-thirds of primaries, or the entire cost of fire service and law and order provision in Britain - estimated at £12bn. "Stuck with mass unemployment and deflationary economics, the Euro would be the breaking of Europe, not its binding," the statement argued.

But suggestions that the Eurosceptics would be willing to do deals with counterparts on the Tory benches were dismissed.

"We don't have a common purpose," Mr Simpson said.

The development was seized upon, however, by the Tory chairman Brian Mawhinney, who said: "For months, they seek to create the impression that the party is united in its mad dash towards transferring powers from Westminster to Brussels. Here again Labour is saying one thing and doing another."

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TURIN CONFERENCE

Beef crisis brings Britain into EU fold

SARAH HELM

Turin

"We can best shape our national destiny by working in partnership with our closest neighbours," wrote John Major in his forward to the Government's White Paper on Europe three weeks ago. "Europe," he declared, "should be about 'co-operation, shared purpose' and 'common enterprise'."

The statements will return to haunt the Prime Minister today at the launch in Turin of the Inter-governmental conference on European reform.

Britain's willingness to work in partnership with Europe has always been doubted by other members. Rarely, however, has its insularity or inability to understand the problems of its European partners been so starkly exposed as since the crisis broke last week over British beef.

European officials and veterinary scientists are still fuming over the failure of the British Government to give the Commission prior warning of the BSE announcement to the Commons 10 days ago. Two

BSE FAULT

days earlier European agriculture ministers had met in Brussels, but Douglas Hogg, Britain's representative, had failed to attend. Britain already knew the beef scare was about to break but Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, heard the news via the media.

Had Britain consulted with the Commission, officials say a co-operative way of resolving the crisis might have been found. Whether the export ban could have been averted is doubtful, but it might have been less Draconian. Prior warning would have given Britain's partners time to help draw up a considered response which might have prevented public fear spreading through Europe. It is this fear, and the inevitable collapse in consumer confidence, that has necessitated the world-wide ban.

Why did Britain not consult? Surely, given the country's massive beef export trade to Europe the Government must have considered the impact of the health scare for European con-

sumers and markets. Commission officials say all the evidence suggests that the Government never once considered the European dimension. "It was not simply that they didn't care ... Europe simply didn't enter their calculations," said one.

The imposition of the EU beef export ban has inevitably provoked howls of anti-European protest in Britain. But from the European perspective the necessity for some sort of ban was clear. The measure was not imposed to punish Britain, but to protect Europe from BSE. The collapse in confidence in British beef could not be allowed to devastate the entire European beef industry.

As the ban has come into effect the Commission has made clear it is ready to help pay compensation, but only when Britain comes to "consult" over what eradication plans it proposes. Even this the Government has been reluctant to do.

For the leaders meeting in Turin the paradox of the British position is clear. The go-it-alone policy over beef has brought home just how much

Britain needs Europe. Late in the day the Government is now showing readiness to co-operate and to accept that it has no choice but to come to Europe for financial help. A deal is expected to be drafted today.

The broader lessons for European "co-operation" and for the search for a common purpose at the IGC are as yet unclear. The devastating effect of the beef ban on British industry cannot yet be assessed. As the worst effects are felt, it may be that the ban hardens British public opinion even further against European integration.

What Britain's partners hope, however, as they meet Mr Major in Turin, is that the beef crisis will help them emphasise the necessity for Britain to recognise that its interests are inextricably tied to Europe.

Jacques Chirac, the French President, and Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, will today undoubtedly take the opportunity to offer sympathy to Britain over the crisis and speak of the need to respond as a union working, in Mr Major's words, in an "common enterprise".

Concerned: The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, who advises against a partial monetary union

Photograph: P. P.



Clarke calculates the ins and outs of EMU

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

SINGLE CURRENCY
thoroughly opposed to a new exchange rate mechanism. M. Clarke rejected the argument made by the French in particular, that countries outside the single currency would try to benefit from competitive devaluation against the euro.

"There are Frenchmen who believe the British are contriving Black Wednesday [when the pound dropped out of the existing Exchange Rate Mechanism]", he said. But he argued that there was no competitive advantage in debasing the currency.

The Chancellor told the committee that he was very concerned about the risk the partial monetary union would be divisive. "It would create enormous strains within the European Union if a hard core took all the decisions," he said.

He also expressed concern that the European Central Bank would take decisions without reference to the interests of countries outside the Euro currency bloc, although finance ministers have started to address this issue, he said.

"It cannot be in anyone's interest in the European Union for friction between the ins and outs to start to develop," he said. He added that it was high time the EU addressed the question of this relationship. The British Government is

addressing this issue, he said. Mr Clarke added that himself was sympathetic to the idea of a single currency, but was a "complete myth" that he was determined to join com what may. He could see himself arguing either way depending on the circumstances.

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NORTHWEST

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Polish ex-leader faces trial over killings in 1970

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

A Polish court opened proceedings yesterday against the country's last Communist leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski, who has been indicted over the killing of at least 44 people during workers' protests in December 1970.

Mr Jaruzelski, 72, a retired general, was Poland's defence minister when the then Communist authorities ordered the army and police to shoot at civilians who were demonstrating against food price rises in Gdańsk and other Baltic ports.

The Gdańsk provincial court, granting Mr Jaruzelski's defence lawyers a request for more time to study the case, decided to reconvene in three months. The court also agreed to consider Mr Jaruzelski's request that the trial be turned over to Poland's State Tribunal, a body that handles cases involving senior government officials.

The former president and Communist Party leader is best remembered abroad for his declaration of martial law in

December 1981, to suppress Solidarity, the mass movement whose leaders eventually restored democracy in Poland in 1989 – paradoxically, with Mr Jaruzelski's co-operation.

A Polish parliamentary committee, possibly influenced by his own view that he acted to prevent a Soviet invasion, recommended last month that Mr Jaruzelski should not stand trial for imposing martial law.

For many Poles, the 1970 killings are as terrible a memory as the declaration of martial law. The Communist authorities initially tried to conceal the truth, partly by arranging secret, night-time burials of the dead workers.

But the events prepared the ground for the emergence of Solidarity in 1980 as the first free trade union in Communist Eastern Europe. Lech Wałęsa, the former Solidarity leader and first post-Communist president of Poland, used to say the 1970 killings on the Baltic coast were the decisive moment leading to his transformation from a humble shipyard electrician in Gdańsk into a world-famous opposition leader.

Several dozen Solidarity supporters stood in front of the court yesterday, holding up banners reading "Communist crimes – genocide crimes" and demanding punishment for Mr Jaruzelski and 11 officials accused of instigating the shootings. "Revenge is not the purpose of this trial. It should restore trust in the justice system," Solidarity's leader in Gdańsk, Jacek Rybicki, told the newspaper *Życie Warszawy*.

Among those accused with Mr Jaruzelski are a former interior minister, a former deputy prime minister and nine former army and security police officers. Poland's reformed Communists, who were returned to power in free elections in 1993, reject opposition charges that they have sought to delay the case going to trial.

Polish lawyers say the trial could be the biggest in the nation's history, with 1,000 witnesses likely to be summoned.

An appeal court last week set aside the acquittal of two generals held responsible for the murder in 1984 of the popular pro-Solidarity priest, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko.



Daughter and mother: Chelsea and Hillary Clinton at Istanbul's Blue Mosque yesterday. They also took in St Sophia Museum

Photograph: AP

international

Balkans' favourite granny sees it all

Consulting with oracles on the part of military and political leaders has a long and honourable history. In fact it is only in recent centuries that the practice has fallen from fashion. No doubt the modern obsession with scientific method has something to do with the change, but science has brought not one jot of foresight and predictability into the political sphere. Leaders are constantly and universally surprised by the twists and turns of history. Chamberlain was taken by surprise, Hitler was taken by surprise. Churchill was taken by surprise. More recently the various already forgotten Communist leaders in Eastern Europe were taken by surprise. And more recently still Margaret Thatcher, George Bush ... from their positions of maximum access to all available information, they got it wrong and paid the price. Bill Clinton is a certain winner in November, of course ... which suddenly makes Bob Dole look rather a good bet.



Zhivkova: Often consults fortune-telling granny

All the more reason then to take Granny Vanga seriously. Granny lives in a remote mountain village in southern Bulgaria, near the border with Greece.

She is 85 years old and blind. But she can see clearly, into the future. And she is the most revered Bulgarian alive.

Compared with her, Hristo Stoichkov, sadly unable to show off his own magic at Wembley on Wednesday, is a nobody.

Her pronouncements are always faithfully reported by Bulgaria's media and provide a much-needed source of comfort as the country makes its painful transition from Communism to democracy and a market-based economy.

Top politicians regularly travel from all over the Balkans and from Russia to seek her post.

Her fellow octogenarian and former dictator Todor Zhivkov still keeps in touch and sent her gifts on her recent name-day, also the Orthodox Christian feast of the Annunciation.

And what was the substance of her pronouncement on this occasion? "Things will be difficult until May but thereafter they will improve," she foretold. There are familiar resonances here. Difficult to place at first, then quite unmistakable. This is our very own Kenneth Clarke.

The Chancellor has not been in southern Bulgaria recently, so far as I recall. But then, Granny Vanga does have a telephone.

James Roberts

What's the connection between Clint and Buffalo?

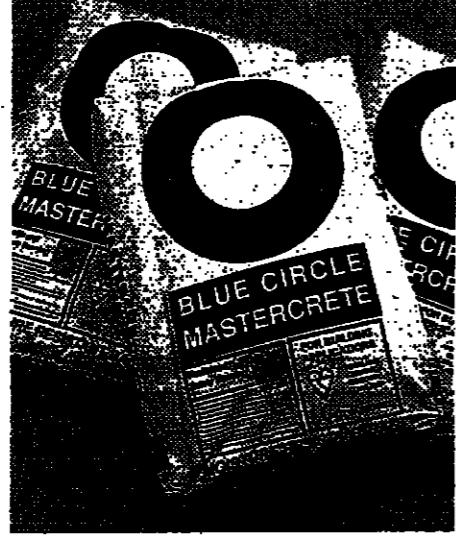


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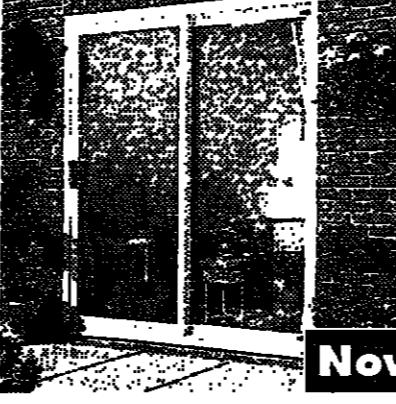


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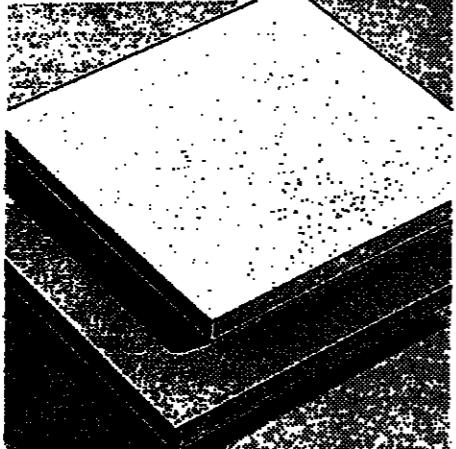
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Police cave in to Inkatha show of force

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

The first group of the 10,000 Zulus to hit the streets of Johannesburg yesterday in a controversial demonstration seemed to materialise out of thin air. The Jeppesfontein district was deserted most of the morning, but for a few dozen soldiers and police agents who cradled shotguns against their flak jackets at some road blocks.

Then, 400 Zulu warriors waving knobkerries, metal pipes.

sticks and spears turned a corner. Where there was silence a moment before, an entire neighbourhood was abruptly heaving with rhythmic chanting and the clacking of truncheons against cattle-hide shields.

The police stared at a wall of Zulu demonstrators in a variety of costumes, ranging from leopard-skin loincloths to pink dresses. The Zulu impi, or regiment, waved its traditional weapons in a taunting manner at the police and in clear defiance of the law.

The police vowed only hours before to uphold the week-old Dangerous Weapons Act. But in such circumstances, even with their shotguns, any attempt to disarm the crowd would have been foolhardy. Instead, the police talked into their two-way radios and gave way before the prancing warriors and ululating women.

It was one of the few tense moments in a day of protest which passed with surprisingly few incidents. The demonstration was called to commemorate

the shooting to death of eight Inkatha supporters outside the Shell House building, the headquarters of President Nelson Mandela's ANC, two years ago, on 28 March. It became known as the Shell House massacre and is still a source of friction between the ANC and Inkatha.

Tension was high before the demonstration as both the ANC and its Inkatha rivals traded accusations of plots to provoke a similar incident.

But in the end, as is often the case in South Africa these days,

it was the law which had to yield. One police officer assured me that "particularly dangerous" weapons, such as spears and axes, had been confiscated.

In the next breath he admitted it had been done in very few cases and only when the police were dealing with small, "managable" groups of Zulus.

A strong show of force by the police and the army, who cordoned off parts of the city centre with razor wire, as well as the police's pragmatic approach to enforcing the law, were credit-

ed for allowing the demonstration to pass without trouble.

But the police's failure to make good its threat has left the government looking weak, and has reinforced an impression that people in South Africa may flout the laws they dislike.

The Dangerous Weapons Act, passed last week at the urging of Mr Mandela and his Safety and Security Minister, Sydney Mufamadi, was aimed at reducing the political violence between ANC and Inkatha in KwaZulu-Natal.

IN BRIEF

China to bar Patten from handover

Hong Kong — China is bent on preventing Governor Chris Patten from participating in the joint ceremony for Hong Kong's transfer to China next year, according to diplomatic sources. Britain's chief negotiator on the handover, Hugh Davies, reported "difficulties" yesterday after the latest round of talks in the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group. *Reuters*

Village siege ends

Leiencau — Commandos overpowered one of Germany's most notorious criminals and freed seven members of his former wife's family that he had threatened to kill during a grueling 24-hour ordeal in a rural village. Prosecutors identified the man as Norbert Hagner, 45, who spent 11 years in jail for a series of spectacular bank robberies and kidnappings in the 1970s and early 1980s. *Reuters*

Okinawa base row

Tokyo — The Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, signed documents to force reluctant property owners on Okinawa to renew leases for US military bases after the local governor refused to do so. Throughout the day, a construction crew hurried to complete a security fence around a US military communications unit where police expect protests against the forced renewal. *AP*

Hunt for monks

Paris — Algerian security forces searching for seven French Trappist monks sealed off the Islamist stronghold of Medea from where they were abducted 24 hours earlier by suspected Muslim militants. "We are waiting anxiously for some news of them but unfortunately we have heard nothing so far," said a spokesman for the Algiers diocese. *Reuters*

Hostage seen alive

Tatraw, Cambodia — A British land mine removal expert and his Cambodian interpreter, held hostage by an armed gang have been seen alive at a camp belonging to Khmer Rouge guerrillas. They were seen by messengers sent by the government to help negotiate the release of Christopher Howes and his colleague in the British-based Mines Advisory Group, who were detained Tuesday. *AP*

Bangladesh sit-in

Dhaka — President Abdur Rahman Biswas agreed to a law that all future elections in Bangladesh be overseen by non-party caretaker governments. But thousands of angry civil servants, defying a police ban and demanding that the caretaker regime take charge now, continued their sit-in at the secretariat, the hub of civil administration. *Reuters*

Farewell in space

Cape Canaveral — Stormy weather, moving into Florida forced Nasai to call the shuttle Atlantis to land tomorrow, a day early. The decision was announced a few hours after the crews of the shuttle and the Russian space station Mir said goodbye in a brief but emotional ceremony. *Reuters*

'Godfather' dies

Tokyo — Shin Kanemaru, who wielded immense power as Japan's political godfather for four decades until he was ousted by a huge corruption scandal, died yesterday of a stroke at the age of 81. *AP*

Obituary page 22

TO
REPORT
AND
CITY

Beef, belief and
kangaroo nibbles

Our Team
faces out



Exercising restraint: An Israeli soldier releasing a handcuffed Palestinian after yesterday's swoop on the university town of Bir Zeit. Photograph: AP

Hundreds held in crackdown on Palestinian students

Jerusalem — Israeli forces yesterday arrested 200 students at Bir Zeit university, 10 per cent of the student body of the most prestigious Palestinian educational institution in the occupied territories, writes Bir Zeit.

In reality, he had been told by his girlfriend.

The commission rejected the thesis that the need for politicians to have direct contact with the public made the task of protecting Rabin impossible.

It said the failings were organisational: it mentioned a number of times the unwillingness of all the security services to direct efforts towards detecting and stopping a Jewish assassin.

The commission was not mandated to deal with the build-up of violent opposition to Rabin's policy of partial withdrawal from the West Bank. Its definition of a conspiracy to assassinate was narrowly defined.

There was no doubt Amir belonged to a circle of militant religious nationalists prepared to use violence to oppose the Oslo Accords. Some members of the group knew of his intentions to kill Rabin. Shlomi Halevy, a student, had told police, though in a convoluted form, of Amir's intention to commit murder, claiming he had overheard it in a lavatory in a Tel Aviv bus station. In reality, he had been told by his girlfriend.

The commission's 214-page report has a 118-page classified annex. Judge Shamgar is very much an establishment figure and the conclusions of the report are for the most part bland.

Mr Gillon stepped down as head of the Shin Bet in January, though he said yesterday that he offered his resignation three days after the assassination. The head of VIP protection has also resigned. Other Shin Bet officials responsible for protecting Rabin were censured in the report.

Rabin's assassination has resulted in much tighter security for senior officials, including his successor, Shimon Peres, and his Cabinet ministers.

Ministers now say that their guards keep them away from the public at a time when they want to mingle with the crowds in the run-up to the election on 29 May.

Bir Zeit, north of Jerusalem, and two nearby villages. Loudspeakers announced that the town was under curfew as teams of soldiers entered student houses and apartment buildings. Students and others detained were held in a playing field in the nearby village of Jifna.

Israeli radio said that 370 Palestinians had been detained. The army said that the aim was

to arrest suspected guerrillas, confiscate weapons and "round up and return home Palestinians who were staying in these areas illegally". This refers to students from Gaza attending Bir Zeit, though the university says only half the students detained come from there.

The mass round-up will further alienate Palestinians on the West Bank who feel that the

limits gains they made through the Oslo accords are being steadily eroded. In addition to the clamp-down by Israel, the Palestinian Authority has arrested at least 700 suspected members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad according to Amnesty International.

In the wake of the four suicide bombings which killed 62 people in Israel, Israeli security

forces have moved back into the 465 villages from which they had largely departed.

The blowing up of the houses of the families of those alleged to be involved in suicide bombing and other high profile gestures appear to be aimed at impressing the Israeli electorate with the government's tough stance on security in the lead up to the election on 29 May.

Priests and a judge in child-sex scandal

ELIZABETH NASH
Madrid

Three priests, a marquis, a university professor, a policeman, a juvenile court judge and a retired flamenco dancer. This collection, together with 50 other people, have one thing in common: embroilment in a scandal involving a homosexual child prostitution ring in the southern Spanish city of Seville. Two men, a comedian and a singer, were bailed for 2m pesetas (£10,000) this week on suspicion of corrupting minors in the case.

After months of investigating

the goings on at the Army gay bar in Seville, Judge María Amilia Echavarri recently lifted the ban on reporting that she had formerly imposed. But she withheld the names of the witnesses, more than 20 boys some as young as 14, for their protection. They are identified only by number.

The scandal emerged when a young victim who did not receive promised payment tipped off the authorities more than a year ago that under-age boys were subjected to sexual abuse by prosperous dignitaries who frequented the Army bar. One

of the witnesses — known by the pseudonym "Edmundo" — said in a radio interview in January that he had been offered clothes, money, drinks, travel and cocaine in exchange for sexual favours.

The decision to conceal the identity of the accused was denounced by defence lawyers as recalling the worst traditions of the Inquisition.

They learnt details of the accusations only by wading through 16 fat volumes of anonymous testimony, a labour that the Justice Ministry eased somewhat at the weekend by

renting for them an industrial photocopier.

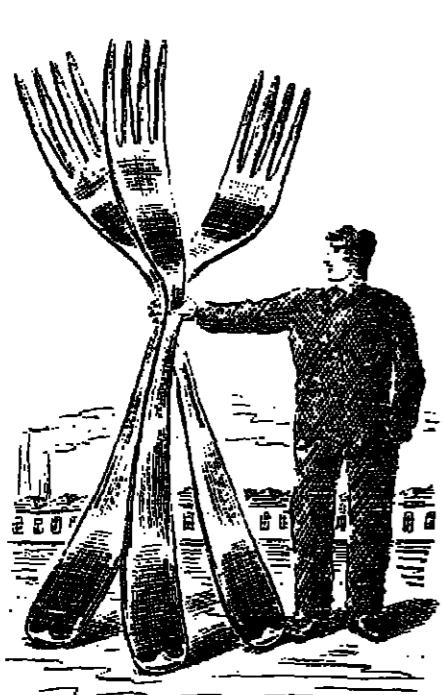
The chief evidence against the singer Javier Gurruchaga was his apparent request by telephone from a Seville hotel to the Army for a "morbo" (an Arab boy) to be sent to him. The Arab had tapped his call. Others, including the comedian Jorge Cadaval, are implicated on the evidence of young victims and in some cases photographs taken in the Army by policemen posing as potential clients.

Judge Manuel Rico Lara, who presided over Seville's juvenile court, was suspended from his functions and bailed for 1m pesetas in January after one boy testified to having had a sexual relationship with him. The judge declared his innocence and claimed he had been a victim of mistaken identity.

The Army was closed last

October and its owner, Carlos Saldana, jailed on charges of promoting under-age prostitution. One of the establishment's highlights was Friday-night bingo with a naked boy in a private cubicle as the top prize. The youths were mostly Spaniards but included some from elsewhere in Europe and Morocco.

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From your doorstep in Britain all the way to Denver, Colorado.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to Phoenix, Arizona.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to Anchorage, Alaska.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to Honolulu, Hawaii.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to San Francisco, California.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to Los Angeles, California.

From your doorstep in Britain all the way to New York City.

Town vs Country

A rampant urban moralism has been unleashed upon the countryside. Those working the land see townies lost in a haze of hypocrisy and ignorance. The BSE scare springs from the estranged relationship of modern farmers and consumers

The wet-eyed young farmer who told a television crew there would soon be more people dead by suicide on farms than dead by Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease was repeating a warning that is being echoed across the countryside. Mad cow disease is not only a health question, nor simply a politics question. It is a question of town and country. It has provoked the biggest crisis for generations in relations between farming, or country people, and the cities where most of us live. And this has been a long time brewing.

In the city, for the consumer, there are always options. In the country, for struggling medium-sized farmers, there aren't. There, the force of urban consumer choice far beyond the power of politicians, will wipe out rural businesses, hopes, companies ... and, probably some lives, too. Once this plague has passed, a whole culture of agricultural know-how will have passed away. And what must hurt more than anything is that the disappearance of those farmers will cause barely a ripple of disquiet among the ruminant urbanites.

There has been a terrible reversal in farmers' reputations. Not so long ago, they were respected national heroes, whose sweat and knowledge helped the country survive war and eat ever better in peacetime. Townies might not know much about farming, but they knew farmers mattered. Only a few generations ago, most factory workers, clerks and professional people would have had some dim memory that their people had come from some working village, shire or farm. In millions of Victorian and early 20th-century workers' homes, prints of farmyards and cottages kept the memory of a rural past alive.

Quite recently, there has been a dramatic change in attitude. A rampant urban moralism has increasingly painted farmers as big-business villains - cruel, greedy, insensitive, polluting. When protesters against the live export of lambs or veal calves blockade Shoreham, urban morality speaks. When hunt saboteurs pack into minivans and head for the shires, urban morality is outraged. When suspicious consumers challenge store managers about pesticides in fruit, when suburban ramblers find old hedges have been grubbed up, or twitchers fail to hear expected birdsong - and in scores of other examples, urban Britain stares bleakly at rural Britain, and finds it wanting.

From the other end of the telescope, the minority still working the land stands back at the cities and suburbs and sees a haze of hypocrisy and ignorance. They see consumers wanting cheap, interesting and varied food, without being ready to spend much time or money on it. Yet the majority who prefers life that way descends into

moral spasms whenever they glimpse the consequences of their impossible demands. Then thinking farmers hear lectures from "animal lovers" who have never sat up at night with a sick calf. Now they must listen to a great roar of approval for the destruction of their livelihoods.

We have been walking towards this disaster for a long time. As the first industrial country, Britain has been losing any connection with growing food for hundreds of years. From the 18th century onwards there occurred one of the great changes in mankind's history. It was simply but well described by the historian Harold Perkin as "a revolution in human productivity, in the capacity of men to bring a living from nature ... This, Perkin said, "enabled a minority of a much larger population to grow the food for all the rest, releasing the majority for other kinds of work, including modern industry, mechanised transport, large-scale government, mass warfare and the professions. It created the modern city ..."

Our contemporary world, with its liberating technologies, its huge human population, its myriad consumer choice, its cyberspace and post-modern irony, rests on something most of us no longer think about. The countryside is a place few people live in and fewer understand. The pressure on agriculture to make less earth produce more food becomes ever more relentless.

There is nothing new about urban squeamishness and willing ignorance when it comes to food. Vegetarianism and a concern for animal welfare have been well-recorded, if minority interests, for hundreds of years. In the early 1700s the Duke of Montagu, who loved lambs but said that "when by chance he saw 'em killing one, he turned his head away and could not bear to look," is the hypocritical ancestor of modern man.

This disconnection between beast and plate, field and food, has grown more dangerous with the rise of factory processing and industrial techniques. Anonymous, highly flavoured, brightly packaged gunk - sweetened breakfast gunk, crispy-dyed snack gunk, breaded microwave TV gunk, even gourmet gunk - is producing an extraordinarily ignorant generation. A survey for the Countryside Campaign, launched last November, discovered that one in five children aged seven to 10 believed eggs were laid by pigs and bacon came from chicken. A third didn't know that oats, barley and peas were grown in Britain. One in 10 thought there were lions, tigers and kangaroos at the British countryside.

Urban adults are, no doubt, less ignorant. We are pretty gullible, even so. We are stupid enough to think that brown-shelled eggs are more "natural"; and when egg producers put colouring in chicken food to

ensure that we get brown-shelled eggs very few of us stop and ask what suddenly happened to all the white-shelled eggs.

We think, or pretend to think, that cows live in fields and that "free-range" chicks spend their lives pecking at corn in cobbled farmyards, rather than in factory-style sheds. And so on. This thoughtlessness about how food happens can lead politicians, like the rest of us, into hilarious inanity, as when Teresa Gorman reminded



The rural dream: industrial workers kept alive the memories of their past with idealised prints

Hutton Deutsch

the Commons, in tremulous tones, that the salmonella scare had caused the death of a million chickens. What, I wonder, did she think was meant to happen to them? That they were going to end their days in Bournemouth retirement homes watching daytime television?

Squeamish ignorance about food is dangerous partly because it leads to events like the current beef and brain disease affair. We swing from long periods of complacency to explosions of hysteria. But it is directly dangerous, too. Had consumers and the media been more interested in food production and more knowledgeable, would farmers have experimented with feeding cows on the mashed remains of sheep? Would the Ministry of Agriculture have been so relaxed about the widespread use of organo-phosphates? Would there have been more caution about the effect of plastic packaging on meat?

There are political answers: an assault on the Common Agricultural Policy, which encourages intensive volume farming at the expense of smaller-scale farms; positive encouragement for organic farming; perhaps a labelling and grading system designed to promote high-quality British food.

But the real power for reform lies with us, the consumers, not only free but hugely powerful and in historical terms, wealthy too. Modern prosperity is encouraging a demand for locally butchered meat, organic vegetables and speciality cheeses.

It may be objected that this is an élite, middle-class development, but many reforms in taste and culture start there. We have enough quantity, indeed, too much quantity. We need quality instead. We need to become a country that grows less, better.

This is a lesson that applies to more about modern Britain than its agriculture. But our agricultural economy, which has come close to disaster in recent days, is where the quality revolution must start.

DIARY

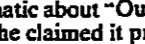
Beef, belief and kangaroo nibbles

In all the secur coverage of the BSE scare, it has been left to the humble *Baptist Times* to come up with a spiritual angle. Under a bold headline, "Beef and Belief", its editorial ponders the problem with proper Christian modesty. "There is little that a newspaper such as ours can add to the debate," it begins. Undaunted, it goes on and asks: "Is there a distinctively Christian contribution which can be made?"

There is indeed. Abstaining from beef is one way Christians might wish to consider the traditional pre-Easter Lenten period of abstinence. "Just tell all the angry farmers that you're very sorry, but you can be blamed - religion strictly forbids that beefburger."

Just one minor drawback, though. Aren't you meant to give up something you'd actually like to eat?

And what to eat instead? There I can be of some assistance. The answer came at a reception at Australia House for costumes from the Australian ballet this week. Guests were nervously fingering the nibbles. Is it beef, they whispered? No, replied the cultural attache, proudly. It was kangaroo. It was. And we all forgot childhoods curled up with AA Milne and munched merrily.



Your share of protest

Tony Blair will be pleased to see his vision of the stakeholder society has been seized on by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. The organisation is urging its supporters to attend the annual meeting of British Aerospace on 1 May to protest against its sale of Hawk fighter planes to Indonesia. To encourage a good turnout, the campaign is advertising free BAe shares in its latest newsletter.

Vive la pay-off

They say these things better in France. Christine Ockrent (right), the most

important woman in the French media, resigned this week as director and editor-in-chief of *L'Express*, France's highest-circulation weekly magazine, following *les différences* with the magazine's new owners. Ms Ockrent, who runs her own production company and hosts a political TV show, said in her farewell letter to staff that she was leaving "with head held high and a generous heart".

It was a fine French flourish. How many media moguls over here even possess generous hearts, let alone publicise them?

Mind you, Ms Ockrent can afford to have a generous heart. According to colleagues, she left *L'Express* with a pay-off which, like her head, was high.

Any abjections?

A misprint that Leeds West Conservative Association certainly didn't intend in the list of motions for the Conservative Central Council meeting at Harrogate this weekend. The case of the deportation of the Sandi dissident is, it boasts, "an abject lesson" to those who come to Britain to abuse our hospitality. Hard to know how to vote, really.

Mad cow jokes: No 1

I see BSE jokes are beginning to surface.

The first has two cows in a field. One says to the other: "Worrying, all this mad cow disease talk, isn't it?" "Doesn't bother me," comes the reply. "I'm a horse."

Competition for this prestigious accolade is stiff. Fred Willy, the Andrew Pippa and Well-Ard, the *EastEnders* dog, are all in the running, and the eponymous will be hosted by Canarie, the Lloyds Bank black horse. In the fine British tradition of sentimental anthropomorphism, my excited source tells me: "Babe will have to keep his trotters crossed a little longer yet."

Readers who have better and sicker offerings ... my mailbag awaits.

Eagle Eye

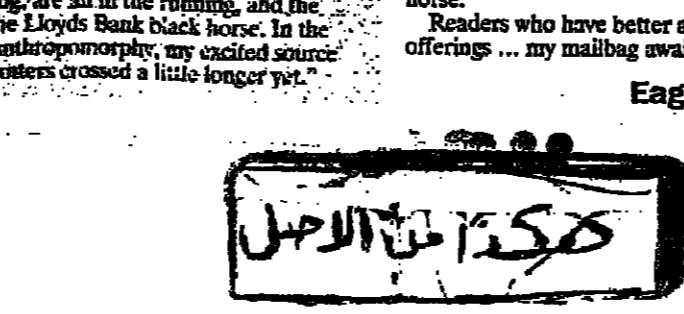


'Our Tune' fades out

An era ends. An era of toe-curling, cringe-making gunge perhaps. But an era nevertheless. Simon Bates's "Our Tune", the mid-morning, how-we-went memory which moved from Radio 1 to Talk Radio. Sadly for toe-curlers, yesterday Bates and Talk Radio parted company, with a spokeswoman being none too diplomatic.

Could Babe pig out with a Flufta?

It has not been a good week for Babe, Australia's unlikely screen star. First, pork sales began to soar alarmingly, as the British abandoned beef and turned to bacon. Then came crushing defeat at the Oscars. Emma Thompson may have been quaffing champagne, but Babe was left with pigs in (although his special effects team won Oscars, above). Hope, however, is at hand. Lloyds Bank, sponsor of the forthcoming *Babe*, has come up with a new award: the Flufta, dedicated to the public's favourite acting animal. And, I'm told, Babe is tipped for the title. Competition for this prestigious accolade is stiff. Fred Willy, the Andrew Pippa and Well-Ard, the *EastEnders* dog, are all in the running, and the eponymous will be hosted by Canarie, the Lloyds Bank black horse. In the fine British tradition of sentimental anthropomorphism, my excited source tells me: "Babe will have to keep his trotters crossed a little longer yet."



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THE INDEPENDENT

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Tories select a loser

The Conservatives are dangerously close to the edge of a gaping hole. It's called a return to the Eleven-plus and it could swallow them. Encouraged by the short-term success they enjoyed exploiting Harriet Harman's decision to send one of her sons to a selective school, they have decided that selection is an issue they can exploit. If they do so, by proposing the widespread reintroduction of selection for secondary schools it will be as political miscalculation as it is educationally flawed and socially regressive.

Britain needs reforms which will break down the class-ridden nature of its education system, not reinforce those divisions by taking us back to the Fifties.

Education yesterday to provide the reluctant backdrop for another pre-election political skirmish. Gillian Shephard, the Education Secretary, promised a white paper to expand academic selection in grant-maintained schools. Earlier her Labour counterpart David Blunkett had launched a plan for Individual Learning Accounts. Underpinning their statements lie two quite different responses to concerns about the quality of education. Yesterday's announcements will set the pattern for many a clash to come.

The Prime Minister's policy unit appears to have persuaded Mrs Shephard to go along with its dream of recreating grammar schools. The White Paper will canvas the possibility of allowing schools to select their intake. It would be a grave mistake.

Setting children for subjects is a great improvement on mixed ability teaching. Institutionalising segregation into separate ability schools is a mistake. Borderline children cannot switch easily between ability groups, and less academic children would be quickly stigmatised. Academic segregation goes against the grain of other advance in the government's education policy — including this week's

dearly report, which tried to encourage a more open and respectful attitude towards vocational skills. Mr Major will find that evoking grammar schools is a political error as well. Schools are not interested. Only one per cent of the grant-maintained schools and education bodies consulted on increasing selection responded with any enthusiasm.

Parents know that education is increasingly the best, if not the only, insurance policy against unemployment and insecurity. They also know that expanding selection will only help those with the brightest. Everyone else will be even more worried than before that their children will be written off.

By advocating grammar schools Mr Major is attempting to soothe parental dissatisfaction with autism. The educational standards and discipline of a mythical golden past are invoked as a solution to the anxieties about change and insecurity in the present. Few will find this convincing. Parents who are concerned about the next generation will be looking for new ideas to help equip them for the future, not old promises about a return to the past.

This is where Messrs Blunkett and Blair step in. Their proposals are aimed at providing remedies for very modern problems. Targeted first at the unskilled in their Individual Learning Accounts would incorporate government, individual and employer contributions to help people take control of their careers by acquiring new skills. Of course Labour hasn't found the answer to the skills deficit in Britain, just as they have not yet found a way to combine diversity and choice within the comprehensive system. But they are at least taking the right kind of approach: one that is inclusive but leaves ample room for choice and individual initiative. Those should be the watchwords of a modern education and training policy.

Eastern fantasies

"I was a cock-up, pure and simple," was the Palace spokesman's explanation for the Queen forgetting to mention the fate of Polish Jews in her speech to the Warsaw parliament. The same could be said of the whole of her gaffe-strewn visit to eastern Europe this week.

But then the visit is itself symbols of the patchy, uncertain and ambiguous character of British engagement with eastern Europe since 1989. Lots of stirring rhetoric, lots of history, some advice, not much action. Margaret Thatcher briefly provided an ideological link with the aspirant monetarist reformers of the region. But that was never going to be enough to sustain a fully-fledged relationship. Yet since her departure Britain's relations in the region seem to have become directionless.

The Queen's trip sits squarely within that amateurish tradition. A gaggle of management consultants making claims about the British formula for privatisation or (incredibly) how to organise local government are no substitute for investment and trade. Hackneyed references to a sense of guilt about the way our leaders behaved in the Thirties and the Second World War (but no visit to Auschwitz) put Britain firmly in these countries' past not their future.

Britain has real interests here. We want Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics and Romania to move west, in terms of outlook, politics and economics. That does not mean premature admission to Nato, or to the European Union. It

should mean a consistent engagement with these countries, underpinned by growing trade and investment.

Yet too few British companies, compared with their German counterparts, have explored the opportunities of eastern markets. In the early days after 1989 many investors got their hands burnt by over-optimistic and ill-judged investments. These days it is much easier to judge where and how to invest with confidence in Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Britain's political engagement with eastern Europe seems opportunistic. Many Conservatives seem to imagine that eastern European states can be cynically co-opted into a scheme rapidly to widen the European Union with the aim of scuppering federalism once and for all.

It is fantasy. The horse has already bolted. German economic influence in Poland and elsewhere is based on trade, capital flows and joint ventures. The Czechs for one may not like it but their absorption into the Deutschmark zone is a fait accompli; eastern Europe's prosperity depends on the Germans.

Of course, as long as the monarchy lasts, the Queen should fly the flag abroad, though one suspects her heart lies in visits across the Commonwealth. But as far as Europe goes, the Queen's visit this week has just served to underline how out-of-touch and unprofessional Britain's approach is. If Britain is to be the standard bearer of a wider EU, it needs to back that with investment and trade rather than royal rituals.

Fishing for a licence

Sir: Your leading article on the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (19 March) rightly identifies the scale of the fishing capacity of modern fleets as a key factor in the problem of overfishing.

However, you say that the size of national fleets is not restricted. Since the beginning of 1995 all member states have been required to operate a licensing system for fishing vessels. In the case of the UK, restrictive licensing was introduced in 1983.

There is indeed an active market in fishing licences (which has allowed nationals of other member states to buy into the UK fleet). It is arguable that the problem lies with the lack of an associated market in quota rights, which could enable fishing firms to adjust their effort to the catches available.

The alternative is that governments must attempt to control fleet capacity by means of licensing and decommissioning schemes, which requires them continually to "second guess" improvements in efficiency (for example through technological progress).

AARON HATCHER
University of Portsmouth

Adoption a fair solution for parent and child

Sir: Polly Toynbee opposes the Government's intention to encourage single mothers to allow their babies to be adopted ("Why the state can't fit the family", 27 March).

Her arguments are strident and somewhat garbled. She draws attention to the cost to the taxpayer of maintaining single mothers in poor conditions which blight the children's chances, dismisses as "sentimental nonsense" the notion that a baby is always better off at the breast of its biological mother and berates the state's incompetence at looking

forwards, but so is much of Ms Toynbee's case.

Ideally, children should be brought up by one or both parents within the wider family. Some single parents are capable of going it alone, but if a single parent is for whatever reason, unable

responsibly to take on the rearing of the child, adoption might seem a fair solution for both parent and child. Single parents should not be forced into adoption, but they should be free to choose it as an option.

WILLIAM M JOHNSTON
Woolstone, Milton Keynes

All actors, male or female

Sir: Rebecca Front (Between the Lines, 27 March) was described as an "acres and comedian". This highlights an anomaly. Can the distinction between male and female actors be justified? Should it not be the "actor and comedian", and should not the work of all actors, regardless of sex, be judged together for awards such as the Oscars?

MARKE FURSE
Brill, Buckinghamshire

Science cannot give political answers

Sir: John Gillott (letter, 28 March), berates Ulrich Beck for talking about the "mistakes and shifting stages of scientific knowledge". Mr Gillott seems to think that there is a single rational approach to scientific issues which will lead us to social progress.

Science works in terms of probability, not certainty. The knowledge it gives is essentially provisional. A glance at last summer's issues of *Nature* or *New Scientist* shows scientists adopting a range of positions over the proposed sinking of Brent Spar. Within the past ten days we have seen some scientific experts in the BSE-CJD field tell us that they have stopped eating beef, others that they are even prepared to let their children eat it.

The widespread misunderstanding that science gives certainty is dangerous because it opens us to the misuse of science as rhetorical tool. This was done by ministers when for the best part

of a decade they invoked science as proof of their assertion that British beef was completely safe.

DAVID PACKHAM
School of Materials Science
University of Bath

Sir: Several of your correspondents claim that science cannot tell us about morality, art, love, or the essence of humanity. This is not a self-evident fact but an

old-fashioned ideological dogma.

Altruism, social cohesion, pleasure, ritual display, emotion, spirituality, and all the rest are dispositions of the brain, built up by genes, and sieved by evolution. All these may be amenable to experimental, demonstrable by mathematical modelling, and traceable through archaeology and anthropology.

The only limits to science are those imposed by our ancient enemies, ignorance and fear.

NICHOLAS WIDDOWS
London NW3

"Excuses, excuses, excuses!" said the woman. "You always have a good story and I always swallow it. Well, not this time!"

And to Polly's amazement she shot her companion, who fell groaning in the scuppers.

The woman then turned the gun on Polly.

"Look," said Polly, "Don't shoot ... I really must be ... I have to ... there's a Melvyn Bragg novel I've got to ..."

To her great surprise and relief the woman lowered the gun and smiled.

"Meh!" she said. "Aren't they the pits?"

"Now let's tip him overboard and get on with that drink he promised you. I'm dying for one myself!"

Coming soon: *Is Jack Lancegood really dead?* What does this strange woman really want? Will Polly break the rules of the single-handed, round-the-world race if she leaves her own craft to cross to another boat for a quick drink and a passionate lesbian affair?

And what will the folk in Carlisle do when they realize that Polly hasn't turned a page of her current Melvyn Bragg novel in days?

Don't miss the next instalment of *Woman Overboard*!

Parks revival

Sir: I commend your suggestion (leading article, 27 March) for the proposed rehabilitation of public parks.

Would this not be the ideal way of spreading Lottery money more equally throughout the country to mark the millennium? Each park helped by such a scheme would require a ring fence as well as adequate patrols. If people living in the immediate vicinity could be encouraged to join management committees, so much the better.

ALAN R YOUNG
Dudley
West Midlands

Help for Kabul

Sir: Your picture story on Afghanistan (23 March) highlights a huge humanitarian catastrophe, caused by over 15 years of civil war.

The main problems facing displaced people are lack of fuel and food. The International Red Cross has been distributing food to 9,000 of Kabul's most vulnerable families with the Afghan Red Crescent. A food-for-work project is also operating in a 35,000-hectare area of what used to be a minefield. Displaced people have made tools and ploughed and sown the land. The first harvest will be in May. The Red Cross is running two main surgical hospitals in Kabul and fully supports four more with medical supplies.

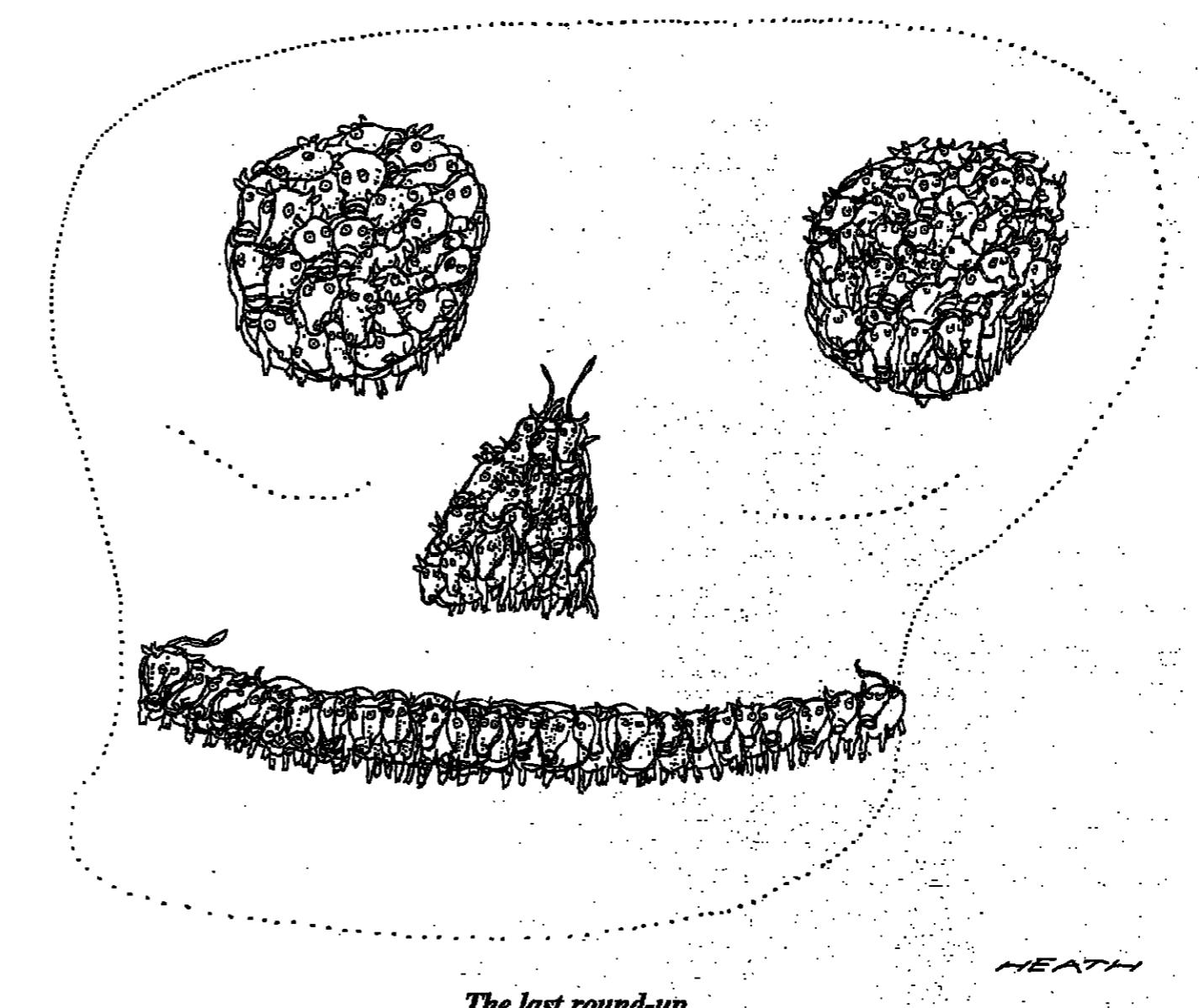
JOHN ENGLISH
British Red Cross
London SW1

Sir: Dr H C Grant (letter, 27 March) states that only people of a rare genotype are susceptible to CJD. Would it not be possible to carry out a mass genetic screening of the population, so that those of this genotype could take precautions, rather than indulge in mass panic?

RICHARD M PREVETT
London W1

Sir: Yes, buy organic beef if you must — but nobody has to eat beef at all. In all my 84 years I have never eaten beef or any other meat, poultry or fish, and I'm considered pretty fit for my age. Let it be said at once, loudly and clearly, slaughtering animals for food is a dreadful way to make a living.

MAURICE WALSH
Berchamsted, Hertfordshire



The last round-up

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dr Carey's commitment to proclaiming the Gospel

Cannibalism, cookery and kuru victims

Sir: Richard Ladle (letter, 26 March) is right to point out similarities between BSE-CJD and kuru, the transmissible brain disease discovered in Papua New Guinea in 1957 which is associated with cannibalism. However, kuru was probably transmitted by a combination of contact with infected brain tissue and poor hygiene, rather than by eating infected flesh.

In his Nobel Prize-winning lecture, published in full in *Science* (1977), vol 197, p423, D Carleton Gajdusek showed that kuru was much more prevalent among women than men, that while women participated in the butchery of the deceased men rarely if ever did so, but both sexes ate the flesh after cooking it. Gajdusek noted that women contaminated themselves, their infants and toddlers with heavily infected brain tissue when the skull of a dead victim was opened and, pointing out that they "rarely if ever washed" suggested that infection "was most probably through the cuts and abrasions of the skin, or from nose picking, eye rubbing, or mucosal injury".

If non-oral routes are indeed the principal ones for the transmission of encephalopathies, then one might expect to find the following:

1. Humans would probably not contract anything from eating scrapie-infected meat. For sheep at least, the experience of the last 200 years would seem to support this view.

2. Humans who handle "volatile" scrapie-infected material, such as dry, rendered bone meal made from contaminated sources, could well become infected by inhaling dust. Could this explain CJD in dairy farmers?

3. Humans who handle less dusty material, such as infected nervous tissue in abattoirs, and who practise sensible hygiene, should be less at risk.

4. Beef from herds which have never been exposed to contaminated bone meal should not contract BSE, which is true for organic farms.

5. Cows fed on infected bone meal would become infected through the nose rather than the mouth. When cows eat meat they push their entire muzzle well into the food.

Research needs to establish the normal transmission route of these "agents" before we conclude that eating of, as opposed to non-oral contamination with, infected material is responsible for encephalopathies in humans.

Dr J S KNOWLAND
Department of Biochemistry
University of Oxford

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Jobless Germany can learn from us

Europe's recession-hit giant must ask whether it can afford to preserve costly industrial harmony

There are beggars in Frankfurt. As an antidote to the endless gloom about the state of the UK – the lack-lustre economy, the sense of insecurity, the incompetence of our government – I went to have a look at the financial capital of what most people would still consider Europe's most successful economy.

If Germany's economic might gives it authority in shaping European politics – for example at the Inter-Governmental Conference in Turin today – it gives it even greater influence in shaping European economies. There is a German way of doing things: ordered, regulated, secure, based on consensus with emphasis on manufacturing excellence. At the other extreme, I suppose, is our way of doing things: entrepreneurial, deregulated, insecure, confrontational, with emphasis on flexible services.

Ten years ago this would have been no contest. Of course consensus was better than confrontation, order better than chaos. Even two or three years ago, while some aspects of the British reforms of the 1980s were being admired and imitated, there was no real feeling of a need to learn. Now the scales between the two visions are more evenly balanced. In the German financial and business community there is a deep concern. Business knows that the German way of doing things has to change, but most of the rest of the country won't accept it. The reason for the need to change is told in one word: unem-

ployment. Germany is back in recession. Frankfurt is superficially as prosperous as ever. But wait: aside from those beggars, the shops are half-full and there are items cut to one-third of their original tag; there are retail sites to let; restaurants are empty; there are streams of taxis waiting for hire. Taxis may be free for those in work, but many are clearly finding the going tough.

This shows in the figures. Headline unemployment is now over 11 per cent, against 7.9 per cent in Britain. Even allow for seasonal factors and look only at the former West Germany, and it is still over 9 per cent and rising. West Germany has lost more than a million jobs in the past four years; in Germany's showcase industry, plant and machinery, employment has fallen from 1,250,000 in 1991 to 980,000 last December.

German industry is going through the seemingly endless downsizing which we have learnt to accept here. In one sense this is a sign of its excellence, its ability to reorganise itself when times are tough. At one extreme, the great Daimler-Benz pulled the plug on its loss-making associate, the Dutch aircraft firm Fokker, and made enormous cutbacks at its subsidiary AEG. The restructuring of the chemicals company Hoechst has been just as remarkable because it has been done in less of a crisis atmosphere.

Middle-sized engineering companies, too, have responded to pressure by improving, yet again, their perfor-

mance. VDMA, the plant and machinery firms' association, explained that its members produce 20,000 different products of which – and this is the remarkable bit – 4,000-5,000 are new each year. They succeed by making custom-built products, designed in close co-operation with the customer. Take the common criticism of German engineers in the past, that they produced products which were over-engineered. Fine, they make them simpler. Just a few days ago there was a story about a piece of heating equipment that used to have 170 parts and is now made with 60.

It is hard to convey this sense of excellence that is so deeply rooted in German mechanical engineering ... except perhaps to BMW or Mercedes drivers. Up to now every time the

mark rises, every time wages are pushed up, every time the government imposes some new regulation or tax, somehow the sheer quality of the German engineering industry has enabled it to continue to hold its own. It is the best.

But it is also hard to convey the sense of shock last year, when, after an excellent recovery from the early 1990s recession, German manufacturers suddenly found themselves plunged back into trouble. They had done all the right things in 1993 and 1994, slimmed down, simplified ranges, cut out waste; exports had boomed. Then in February and March last year the mark shot up by 6 per cent and the employers agreed to pay increases of more than 4 per cent. Foreign customers stopped buying. Suddenly the whole of German industry had to cut all over again.

The result is insecurity. All the familiar concerns of the UK are now heard in Germany: the fact that companies get rid of some of the most experienced people first, because they are the most expensive or closest to retirement age; or that young graduates, even engineering ones, cannot get jobs. If there is an obvious parallel there are, however, two key differences from the UK. One is the position of the unions; the other the attitude of the government.

Unlike in the UK, in Germany the unions are still part of the decision-making process. They still come to Helmut Kohl's "round table", prompt-

ing the comment that round tables are a dangerous form of furniture. To a British observer this all feels very 1970s: a much more sophisticated level of debate than the beer and sandwiches at No 10, and of course applied to a vastly more competent economy, but the same search for consensus at whatever ultimate cost.

And government is different. Mr Kohl's ruling coalition has just won a resounding victory in the regional elections. Voters are evidently happy. They want an interventionist state. They do not mind high tax rates, or at least they accept them if there are sufficient loopholes. Taxes are high not only at the top, it is astonishing that, for those who earn between £6,750 and £9,500, every extra mark earned is offset by cuts in social security payments or contributions.)

If voters back your policies there is no political pressure to change. If German industry is as wonderful as ever, government lags behind.

It is always dangerous to project one country's experience on to another. The German way forward will be completely different from our own, not only because we have a different industrial structure but because we have different attitudes. Yet three people I spoke to volunteered that Germany could learn a lot from British labour market reforms. One of them said British industry was now taken very seriously as a competitor. Times have changed.



HAMISH MCRAE

Unions are part of decision making, they come to the round table

Is selection good for the kids?

The Government wants schools to select more pupils. Here, two experts debate the issues



In a class of their own? Girls at a Reading comprehensive that has introduced a grammar stream

The return of grammar schools will reinforce social divisions, says Tony Mooney

Yesterday's speech by Education Secretary Gillian Shephard was yet one more indication of the open dislike that the Tories have for comprehensives. By further increasing the proportion of students that schools will be able to select by ability, she has confirmed my worst fears that we have merely reached another staging post on the road to full selection.

The effect of these measures will be to intensify the dogfight between local comprehensives that has emerged in recent years. These measures will ensure that many of our comprehensives, situated in unattractive, deprived areas of our cities, will rapidly become the secondary moderns of yesterday.

How will the schools with their new powers of selection, choose their pupils? You can put your mortgage on the fact that most will try to incorporate an interview into their procedures.

Interviews give you a clear indication of the social-class of the parents and headteachers will be falling over themselves to try to offer places to the supportive middle-classes.

It would be terrible shame if the education system was forced into selection. Our comprehensives are not the pits of mixed-ability teaching that right-wing politicians would have you believe. Most have been into "setting" and "banding" by ability for years. Many recognise that for many of our students such arrangements get the best results.

I might be wrong, but I strongly believe that the push for selection once again highlights the social class divisions that exist in our society. The activists in favour of selection secretly believe the bright middle-class youngsters at secondary level ought not to have to tolerate the behaviour of their more roughly hewn peers from working-class homes. An out-of-date theory? If you don't believe me, talk at length to some of the middle-class parents in Islington, where I live, who are about to choose secondary schools for their children.

The writer is headteacher of Ruthish School, London Borough of Merton.

Mixed-ability classes prevent pupils from reaching their potential, says Sheila Lawlor

than in the past to the unquestioned acceptance of authority. The consequences of family breakdown also feed into the classroom.

But there is one reason above all for selection – and that is the pursuit of academic excellence. The serious issue we must face is to restore the intellectual framework of education, which has been away through the cracks of successive reforms as each reforming minister has opened up the relatively fragile institution of the school to the forces of a progressive state, and schools and parents to decide.

There are pragmatic reasons for setting streaming or selecting children on grounds of ability. It may help teachers to teach and stretch their pupils. But there are more important grounds: the future of education in this country, as a matter of intellectual endeavour, makes the further use of selection essential.

Comprehensive schooling on a mass scale became possible only by making the classroom a place where pupils learn how to "do" things rather than learn how to think. The teacher, in the degrading speak of the Eighties, became the facilitator who enabled children to acquire skills. In practice, the distinction was necessary given

the difficulty of imparting knowledge over a wide ability range, and the exams and curriculum followed suit. The anti-intellectual levels to which education in this country – and this country alone – have descended has been partly the consequence of the dogmatic imposition of comprehensive schooling.

Selection is not the only basis for successful teaching. Certainly, it should not be for the state to dictate to schools and parents the kind of teaching they must follow. That choice must be for the school and parents, not the state, central or local. What is needed is a liberal framework where government stands aside for schools and parents to decide.

There are pragmatic reasons for setting streaming or selecting children on grounds of ability. It may help teachers to teach and stretch their pupils. But there are more important grounds: the future of education in this country, as a matter of intellectual endeavour, makes the further use of selection essential.

The writer is director of *Politics, the Forum for Social and Economic Thinking*. She was formerly deputy director of the Centre for Policy Studies.

Everyone loves a good uniform

Civvy street's flunkies need a lesson from the Navy in how to dress, says Jonathan Glancey

Every girl (and many a boy) loves a sailor. Quite why, I do not know. It could, of course, be the natty, flared trousers. After all, they do have a habit of flapping back into fashion every few years and young girls will develop seasonal crushes on them. Though that still doesn't explain the boys.

Sailors began wearing flares

in 1854 and enjoyed cutting and sewing their own in a number of fetching styles until 1914 when standard issue bell bottoms became the order of the day. Only this week, the first review of Royal Navy dress in 25 years found in favour of bell bottoms. The new-flare flares will not be quite as wide as they were in days of yore, but, as Commander David Hobbs who conducted the review pointed out, "the slight flare looked just right. So we decided to keep some of the old tradition."

Like other examples of traditional dress sailors' bell bottoms, we, or had, a purpose: they were easy to roll up when Jack Tar had to climb rope rigging. They are also highly distinctive and this, in part, is why the Navy should be patted on the back (nothing more familiar than that, mind you) for retaining a form of dress by which we can spot one of Her Majesty's sailors a league away.

Uniforms – ceremonial uniforms in particular – ought to be distinctive. Such a uniform encourages a sense of belonging in the mind of the wearer and allows the public to distinguish between services, ranks and roles. In today's cities, homogeneous uniforms are proliferating: private traffic wardens, deregulated bus drivers, shopping mall and supermarket security guards, even postmen, all sport a banal American-style mall uniform. It makes them look sloppy, silly and unprofessional: the uniforms they wear bear little or no relation to British tradition nor to the work they do. It is hard to tell them apart.

The right uniform – well designed, distinctive and practical – should be something to be proud of, not because uniforms have a fetishistic value (although they do), but because, at their best, they reflect the value of the skill or job of the wearer.

Today, the British fail to design uniforms or, in many instances, do not like wearing them even though each school, from Sloane Rangers to Toon Army rankers can be recognised by the "uniform" it wears. The old adage that the Germans lost the Second World

War, but had the best uniforms, holds true: British soldiers, no matter how dutiful or brave, were often made to look foolish, as family albums prove.

Even when decent uniforms have been provided (London bus drivers until the mid-Sixties, engine drivers (until British Rail replaced British Railways), they have often been replaced by designs from cutters wading out of their depths).

The new-flare British Rail uniforms of 1964 were much ridiculed by cartoonists, and rightly so. At a stroke, they belittled the dignity of those who wore them.

This made a kind of perverse sense, for just when the role of

The only smart civilian uniforms are those worn in fast-food joints

engine driver was reduced from that of craftsman to machine-tending worker, so his new-age uniform diminished him. The same was true of London bus drivers. In the Thirties, these highly trained knights of the road were (along with top-flight engine drivers) among the best paid workers in Britain. Today's deregulated bus companies pay peanuts to their drivers, a minority of whom hurl busloads of pensioners, tots and shoppers around corners at uncaring speeds. They dress in a guise that reflects their reduced status and, it often appears, skill.

Air stewards ("Hi, I'm Jason, let me know if I can help you") and stewardesses ("any drink or hot beverage at all for you sir?") are also dressed in dowdy building society uniforms that lack the grace and undoubted sex appeal of cabin crews from the era of the Lockheed Constellation and Boeing Stratocruiser.

The only ostensibly smart civilian uniforms we see day to day are those worn in fast-food joints, holiday camps and theme parks. These are not well designed uniforms – far from it – yet they are washed, cleaned and worn with a hint of pride.

Years ago, civilian uniforms took their cue from the military. Perhaps it is time they did so again. For if bell bottoms help every girl (and many a boy) to love a sailor, think what a stylish uniform could do for the driver of a Number 68 bus.

"How to Look Sexy, Make Friends and Manage Your Boss"

People Watching

by

Vernon Coleman

"The ubiquitous media doc has done it yet again: this time it's the talents for producing sparkling gems of information in rapid-fire sequence to the field of body language and private habits. As always, he makes his subject both personally relevant and of practical use. Here's how to judge people by the bags

they carry or the cars they drive, plus how to manipulate your doctor, appear sexy or make a rival uneasy and a host of other tips too. Once you start to browse you would have to be a hermit not to find it utterly unpardonable."

(The Good Book Guide)

Contents include:

- 3 ways to tell when someone is lying
- 7 signs that someone is interested in you sexually
- 8 giveaways signs of nervousness
- 6 ways to tell if someone is bored
- 20 ways to look sexy
- 12 ways to look like a winner
- 10 ways to be a successful interviewee
- 11 ways to negotiate successfully
- 10 ways to avoid being mugged
- 8 ways to manage your boss
- 16 ways to deal with aggressive people
- 22 ways to get power over people
- 4 ways to make people like you
- and much much more!

To order your copy send a cheque or postal order for £9.95 (payable to Publishing House) to: People Watching Sales Office, IN26, Publishing House, Trinity Place, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9HJ. Post and packing is FREE. Your book will be despatched within 28 days. Money back guarantee – simply return within 28 days of receipt for a full refund if not delighted.

Britain's failure to back an EU plan for parental leave is wrong and out of touch, says Helen Wilkinson

Litmus test of family values

Today, the European Council of Ministers is likely to agree to give all parents a minimum of three months unpaid parental leave. For many years, this is hardly a radical step. Germany already offers up to three years off and Sweden up to 15 months off. Yet Britain, alone among the European Union's 16 members, will not be signing up for the directive. As far as our politicians in Westminster are concerned, parental leave is now off the agenda.

But whatever Britain's attitude to Europe, it is quite clear that debate about parenting is intense in millions of households around the country. What was once just a personal issue is fast becoming a political one as three powerful forces converge to put the issue on the agenda in the UK.

The first force for change is mounting pressure from working mothers and fathers. People are agonising over the stresses and strains of being a modern-day parent as they juggle con-

flicting priorities and embark on endless battles over who will take time off and who will come home early from work. These "parenting pains" are a clear factor in relationship breakdown: the number of divorces granted to couples with children under five has increased by two-thirds since the mid-Seventies. Few women want to sacrifice their jobs and careers to become permanent full-time mothers. Growing numbers of men want to play a more active role as fathers. Both are increasingly looking to the Government, as well as employers, to give them greater flexibility.

The second factor is an increased awareness that direct parental care is better for children in the early years of their life than other forms of childcare. Even in countries such as Swe-

den, which has a high-quality childcare network, parental leave has become so much part of the culture that there is now almost no use of childcare for children under the age of one.

The third, less visible, force for change is demography: a fifth of women born in the Sixties are predicted to remain childless. Many young women see parenting as an unattractive prospect – costly, hard work and undervalued. In the long-run, if many more opt out of parenting, employers and taxpayers may well be inadequate to sustain a growing elderly population. Women will need help and encouragement to become mothers.

Fortunately, one of the advantages of being the laggard of Europe is that

are in place, not least because many find that productivity and employee commitment is improve. Even the burden on public finances turns out to be lower than at first appears, since the jobs created for people filling in for parents on leave reduces unemployment costs and boosts tax revenues.

In the long run, the pressure for more balanced lives, and for a welfare system that is better suited to a world where both men and women work, is mounting inexorably. Britain happily subsidises everything from farming to home ownership. There is a new pressing claim on resources. Parental leave could soon become a litmus test of whether our politicians really are serious about family values, regardless of our absence in Brussels today.

Parental leave – the price of family values? by Helen Wilkinson and Ivan Bristow is available from Demos, 9 Bridewell Place, London EC1A 6AP. Tel: 0171 353 4479.

55-1 of 31st

C&W in £33bn merger talks with BT

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Cable & Wireless last night ended weeks of speculation by confirming that it was in talks with BT that could lead to a £33bn merger of the groups and rewrite the map of the telecommunications industry.

The merger would also be by far the biggest ever in the UK, dwarfing last year's £9.3bn marriage of the Glaxo and Wellcome drugs companies.

The company was forced into making a statement after the stock market had closed after a

surge in its own and BT's share price in late afternoon dealings. The shares soared amid intense rumours that previous one-off discussions between the arch-rivals had finally been revived.

C&W said: "The board of Cable & Wireless noted the recent movement in the share price. Cable & Wireless confirms that some exploratory discussions are being held with BT which may or may not lead to a merger of the two companies. A further statement will be made if appropriate although there is no immediate expectation of this."

BT has consistently refused to comment in recent weeks, but City sources say an approach was made to Cable & Wireless at the end of last year after the abrupt departure of both its chairman and chief executive.

Sir Iain Vallance, BT's chairman, is believed to be determined to acquire C&W but it is unlikely that anything could happen without the agreement of C&W and the blessing of the Government. The merger - with appropriate conditions - is unlikely to be resisted by ministers.

Any deal between BT and C&W would face formidable

regulatory hurdles in Britain and Hong Kong, where C&W's most valuable asset is based - its 57.5 per cent stake in Hongkong Telecom. If the merger would also encounter difficulties in Germany, where the two companies have stakes in rival telecommunications groups.

The merger would be the biggest in UK corporate history and would almost certainly involve the sale of Mercury Communications, C&W's UK arm and the main rival to BT. Don Crickshank, the industry watchdog, said recently that the main issue for him in the event

of any merger and subsequent disposal of Mercury would be the strength and commitment of the new owners.

The plan would also have to include a solution for Mercury One-2-One, C&W's mobile joint venture with US West, which competes with BT's Cellnet. There was speculation yesterday that BT might in some way live off its 60 per cent stake in Cellnet, the balance of which is owned by Securicor.

Shares in C&W climbed 34p during the day to 511.5p, valuing the company at £11.3bn, while BT's rose by 14.5p to 348.5p, a valuation of £21.9bn. The surge spilled over to Wall Street. American Depository Receipts in BT rose by more than \$3 to \$54.25 and C&W by \$3 to \$24.6.

The negotiations at C&W are being conducted by Rod Olsen, acting chief executive and Brian Smith, non-executive chairman. The group has been actively attempting to recruit a new chief executive and an announcement had been expected within days. The talks with BT appear to have inevitably muddied the waters and C&W declined to comment on any potential management changes.

The driver for BT in acquiring C&W are its international activities, in particular the Hong Kong telecom stake and other operations in the Asia Pacific region. Sir Peter Bonfield, BT's new chief executive, has said within recent weeks that Asia Pacific is one region where BT must expand to ensure its future as a leading global player. Any deal between BT and C&W would face tough regulatory hurdles in Hong Kong. It could also face difficulties in Germany, where the two companies have stakes in rival telecommunications groups.

BT is keen to expand outside the core UK operations which are increasingly squeezed by regulation and competition. The company's prices are at present capped at inflation minus 7.5 percentage points and are being reviewed now by Mr Crickshank. The watchdog's proposals for new price controls are expected to culminate in a tougher cap to come into effect next year. BT must agree the changes decided by the regulator or the matter will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Employment: Political uproar as utility lays off thousands of workers, but expansion plans bring some good news for Wales and Ulster

United Utilities ignites jobs row

MARY FAGAN

A political row erupted yesterday following news of 2,500 job losses at United Utilities, the company formed by North West Water's £1.8bn takeover of Norweb, the regional electricity firm. The lay-offs compare with 800 previously projected and will be largely in the core water and electricity operations.

Ian McCartney, shadow employment minister, attacked the planned cuts as "a slap in the face for thousands of hard-working employees". He added: "United Utilities is among the most profitable utilities in the country, and there is absolutely no need for these redundancies. Yet again the taxpayer is to be landed with a huge bill for unemployment benefit as employees are sacrificed to give a quick fix to the balance sheet."

Brian Staples, chief executive,

said: "It's regrettable and we do not like it. But it is a fact of life in the industry today. The best people across both businesses will go forward with the group."

The job cuts in the core businesses emerged alongside plans to dispose of the group's retail contracting and process equipment divisions, which employ about 4,000 in the UK and elsewhere. United also intends to pull out of power generation, an activity inherited from Norweb, which the new ownership feels is too small to be "meaningful".

United also hinted that it might seek further acquisitions in its drive to be a super-utility. The company said: "Ways are being explored of extending the group's utility activities into Europe whilst at the same time watching with interest the continued rationalisation in Europe."

The group said that the sav-

ings from the Norweb merger would be £140m a year by the end of the decade, about 40 per cent more than had been originally thought.

Earnings enhancement in 1996/97 will also exceed expectations and real dividend growth of 11 per cent per annum is "possible".

United will make a provision of £104m this year, largely to cover severance costs. Gearing at the end of the year will be 90 per cent, rising to 100 per cent next year but quickly falling back to between 75 and 80 per cent.

The planned divestments, which the group said could take some time to achieve, could cut a further 10 per cent.

The move was broadly welcomed among City analysts. But some warned that United still faces the uncertainty of price control reviews at the end of the decade by two watchdogs, Ofwat and Ofgem. According to one analyst: "There is not much to get worked up about here except what appears to be a strategic decision to retrench into the core utility operations." The group's shares moved up 14p to 611p.

Separately, Calor Group yesterday warned of redundancies to come, and British Rail's engineering development unit announced job losses.

Calor, Britain's biggest supplier of bottled gas, warned more than 500 workers at its Slough headquarters, close to London, that there would be redundancies following a decision to close the office by next year.

The move forms part of a plan to redistribute head office functions between existing regional offices and a new customer management centre to be established this year near Leamington Spa in Warwickshire.

The company refused to give further details ahead of a preliminary results announcement due this morning, but the business is known to be facing difficulties.

British Rail's engineering development unit is to close by the autumn with the loss of 58 jobs. BR had hoped to sell the Derby-based unit, which specialises in development of prototype rail vehicles.

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Now Norweb pulls out of retailing

NIGEL COPE

The decision by United Utilities to sell Norweb's electrical retail interests makes it the latest in a long list of the privatised utilities to abandon the cut-throat market.

Eight electricity companies have now pulled the plug on their electrical stores in the last 12 months, as pressure to deliver value for shareholders forces tough decisions on peripheral activities. The Runbys chain also closed a year ago blaming mounting losses for the decision.

Only a handful of the regional electricity companies, including Seaboard, Northern and Scottish Hydro are still battling on. Only Scottish Power is still expanding aggressively. Most have been making substantial losses and have either sold or closed large parts of their operation.

Norweb's electrical division is unusual in that it was making profits - £8m last year on sales of £207m. It has 90 high street stores and 67 out of town units.

Eight years ago East Midlands Electricity and Yorkshire sold their Homepower joint venture. South West and web Manpower gave up the fight in April. In May the Powerhouse chain, which was jointly owned by Eastern, Midland and Southern, was put on the market.

Following Eastern's takeover by Hanson, some 200 of the outlets were sold to the management and another 200 were closed.

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Comment, page 25

Most are in the North West though it has 18 stores in the South West after its purchase last year of some of Swalec's outlets.

The most likely candidate to buy the stores is the company's management, led by Peter McTaggart, the group's retail director. He joined Norweb in 1992 and was previously a board director at Comet.

The electrical retail sector is rapidly consolidating into a few major players led by Dixons (which also owns Currys) and Comet, part of the Kingfisher group.

Barry Knapp, chief executive of Cable & Wireless, said: "It's a fact of life in the industry today. The best people across both businesses will go forward with the group."

He added that the company intends to make the network available to other cable operators, which have been seeking ways of avoiding the charges made for the use of networks operated by BT, Mercury and Energen.

NTL, which supplies transmission services to ITV, Channel 4 and independent radio stations through a network of 600 masts and microwave links, was sold off by the Government.

"This creates a unique national telecommunications network,"

when it disbanded the old Independent Broadcasting Authority in 1991. An investment group led by a division of Mercury Asset Management bought the operations for £70m.

In addition to £200m in cash, financials through bank loans, Cable & Wireless will pay NTL shareholders, which include its employees, another £35m in a year's time.

The shareholders of NTL will have seen a 25 per cent return on their investment in just

National Statistics said it would shed up to 300 jobs in the coming year as it merges staff at the Central Statistics Office and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Tim Holt, ONS chief executive said he wanted its statistics to be more user-friendly and readily available as well as preserving individual privacy. "I

want official statistics to be more widely available and more widely used, not just by businesses and analysts but by ordinary people," he said.

A Bank of England spokesman said the move was being made because the high street banks had taken on much of the work in distributing banknotes previously. The Bank

said it intended to eliminate costly duplication between its own arrangements for processing, storing and distributing banknotes and those of the commercial banks. This should save around £4m per year, but will be partly offset by the £1m per year costs of the regional agencies.

Alastair Darling, Labour's City spokesman, said it was essential that the Bank of England maintained its economic intelligence units in the English region as well as in Wales, Scotland and northern Ireland.

"We want to broaden the basis on which the Bank of England formulates the advice that it gives to the Chancellor on interest rate policy," he said. "We propose to establish a Monetary Policy Board that will include members from the City and from industry in order to reflect views from different parts of the country."

The company, which set up in Northern Ireland in 1989, expects to employ 1,000 by December.

KH Nam, vice-president of Daewoo, said the Northern Ireland facility was one of the group's main overseas investments. "We see the Antrim plant at the forefront of our strategy to treble our VCR market share in Europe and to expand sales into the Russian republics."

Meanwhile, another 230 jobs are being created by YG-1 at an £8.5m plant to manufacture precision cutting tools in west Belfast.

Daewoo and L&G set to recruit

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Almost 1,000 jobs are being created in Wales and Northern Ireland after the insurance giant Legal & General and two South Korean companies yesterday unveiled expansion plans.

Legal & General said that it would recruit about 400 people over the next three years for a new sales and advice centre being set up in Cardiff. The company, which declined to reveal how much it was investing, had considered sites in North-east England and Surrey.

The decision was welcomed by the Welsh Development Agency as an "important milestone" in achieving their target of creating 10,000 new jobs in finance and commerce.

More than 360 new jobs are on their way to Northern Ireland following investments of more than £25m by South Korean companies Daewoo and the YG-1 Tool Company.

Daewoo is creating 330 jobs by the end of the year in a £14.8m expansion, with Government-backed video recorders and deck mechanisms production at its plant in Antrim.

The expansion was announced by Northern Ireland Economy Minister, Baroness Denton, during a visit to the company headquarters in South Korea. She said it was "an extremely important" investment because it reduced the Antrim plant's dependence on components from Korea.

The company, which set up in Northern Ireland in 1989, expects to employ 1,000 by December.

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Black day for employees: Thousands more will be searching for work at JobCentres after yesterday's lay-offs

Bank of England axes offices

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Three hundred and fifty jobs were lost yesterday in the public services financial sector as the Bank of England and the National Statistics Office announced cost-saving exercises.

The Bank said it was closing four regional note-handling centres at a cost of 150 jobs over the next 12 to 18 months as part of a shake-up of its system for distributing banknotes.

Cash handling will cease at Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Newcastle, and in future the issuing of bank notes and the disposal of old ones will only be handled at the Bank of England branches in London and Leeds.

Offices will be maintained in these cities for monitoring economic trends and new ones will be opened in Cardiff and Nottingham, taking the total around the country to 12.

The newly formed Office for

five years. The deal is likely to fuel renewed criticism over the privatisation of Government-owned assets at fire-sale prices, and could lead to a sharply higher valuation for the BBC's transmission services, which have been earmarked for sale, perhaps by the end of the year.

Jeff Hoon, Labour spokesman on information technology and telecommunications, said last night: "This just demonstrates the concerns we had at the time of privatisation. If [the BBC's sale] goes ahead, we must ensure that a proper price is paid."

Last year, NTL had revenues of £109m, and pre-tax profits before extraordinary items of about £37m. It has been a big capital spender, in order to finance development of its broadcast and telecoms contracts, which include satellite as well as radio transmission. It recently won the right to provide transmission services for Channel 5, the terrestrial service scheduled for launch in early 1997.

NTL had revenues of £109m, and pre-tax profits before extraordinary items of about £37m. It has been a big capital spender, in order to finance development of its broadcast and telecoms contracts, which include satellite as well as radio transmission. It recently won the right to provide transmission services for Channel 5, the terrestrial service scheduled for launch in early 1997.

A member entitled to attend and vote is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote. A proxy need not be a member.

By order of the Board of Directors

D M Simpson

Secretary

Edinburgh, 28 March 1996

Policyholders may obtain a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts, including the agenda, by writing to the Customer Service Information Team at PO Box 141, 1 Tanfield, Edinburgh EH3 5RG or by telephoning (0131) 245 2668. Proxy forms may be similarly obtained by members entitled to vote.



STANDARD LIFE

CableTel buys NTL broadcast network for £235m

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

International CableTel, Britain's third largest cable operator, is paying £235m for NTL, the leading commercial broadcast services provider, as a step towards creating CableTel's creation of a national network.

"This creates a unique national telecommunications competitor,"

Barry Knapp, chief

Redland to create European tile giant

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Redland yesterday announced plans for a radical overhaul of its building materials operations that will create Europe's largest roof tiles manufacturer with sales of DM3bn (£1.33bn). Details of the deal, which will involve a merger of its own interests with those of its successful German subsidiary, Braas, are likely to be unveiled within the next few weeks.

Robert Napier, chief executive, also said negotiations were at an advanced stage with four potential buyers of its UK brick arm. In addition, discussions are in train to sell Redland's US brick operations, which will complete a reversal of the company's expansion in bricks early in the 1990s when it bought rival Steetley. Mr Napier admits now that Redland overpaid for that deal.

The ambition of Braas comes as that company's core German activities face a rapid slowdown in construction activity. The underlying weakening in trading has been exacerbated in the early months of 1996 by poor weather across Europe, and Redland warned

that first-half profits will not match those achieved in 1995.

Although Braas has given Redland exposure to the recent post-unification building surge in Germany, recession is taking its toll and Redland believes now is the right time to simplify the relationship between the two companies and reduce duplication of investment.

The shape of the proposed deal is still uncertain, but it is understood that Redland will inject its tile businesses, based in the UK, France, Spain and the Low Countries, into Braas, which focuses further east, in exchange for a mixture of cash and Braas shares.

Currently Redland owns 50.8 per cent of Braas and it is thought that the German company's minority shareholders are prepared to see that stake rise to about 60 per cent. A newly named company will be created, probably headed by a Braas-nominated chairman and with a board of directors taken from both Braas and Redland.

News of the restructuring accompanied full-year figures which underlined the difficult trading conditions facing Redland last year. Pre-tax profits be-

came exceptional items fell 5 per cent to £355.1m (£373m), which Mr Napier said represented a strong management performance in the face of volume falls in most of its markets of up to 10 per cent. Price rises in line with inflation were pushed through and cost-cutting largely offset the volume-induced margin fall.

The reported profit figure of £73.2m was hit further by an £81.9m exceptional charge, mainly made up of book value write-offs at Genstar, Redland's aggregates operation in Maryland. A maintained final dividend of 11.2p, following the interim reduction, resulted in a full year total of 16.7p (19.1p).

In the UK, where Mr Napier said "the phones stopped ringing last March", volumes of sand, gravel, dry stone and ready mixed concrete all fell by more than 10 per cent. Higher prices offset much of the damage, but the weaker housing market also hit brick demand, leading to a fall in UK profits from £44m to £35.2m.

Germany, the dominant profit contributor, saw an 11 per cent fall in DM profits, although currency movements limited the fall to £3.6m, down to £191m.



There may be more grey hairs, but 14 years after the collapse of his original Sky Train, Sir Freddie Laker's smile says it all: We're back in business.

Nothing could take the shine off the launch of his new transatlantic air service yesterday. Not even having to rent an aircraft for the occasion, after his own failed to arrive on time. A cockpit windscreen cracked – possibly from a bird strike – during a test flight of his own aircraft, delaying its entry into service.

The first route, Manchester to Orlando, started yesterday and Sir Freddie (above) was on hand with desk staffer Susan Turner to welcome passengers on board. Departures from London Gatwick are scheduled to start today.

The new Laker Airways service is aimed at the booming Florida holidays market, with fares pitched at a highly competitive £299 round-trip. The original Laker Sky Train founded in 1982 in the face of fierce competition and cut-throat fares.

Queens Moat struggles to profit

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Queens Moat Houses, the hugely-indebted hotel group, continues to struggle towards recovery, returning to the black last year for the first time since 1991. But Stanley Metcalfe, chairman, presented a decidedly cautious view of the future as he announced the results yesterday.

"At this early stage in the current year, I can report that trading has been satisfactory," he said. Economic growth was a major factor in the company's revenue growth, and while he was "cautiously optimistic about the trading environment for the UK in 1996," prospects for growth in Germany and France were not good, particularly against a background of intense competition.

Pre-tax profits of £42.4m in the year to December replaced a deficit of £95.2m last time, but the group still faces a mountain of debt and would have been in loss but for £48.8m of interest waived under last year's £1.3bn

capital restructuring. Borrowings stood at £1.02bn at the end of December, down from £1.28bn the previous year.

The group made another small inroad into that yesterday when it was announced that Stakis, the Scottish hotels and casinos group had paid £3.4m for the Europa, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The hotel, to be known as the Stakis TyneSide in

The news left the shares unchanged at 22p yesterday – although they have soared since being re-listed at 3p last May after being suspended for more than two years.

Mr Metcalfe said that the further improvement in the group's trading performance anticipated at the half year results in September was evident in the full year figures. Operating profits rose from £35.2m to £44.7m. After adjusting for the effects of the restructuring – principally higher operating rentals – the underlying increase was 54 per cent.

Andrew Coppel, chief executive, said trading conditions had continued to improve in the UK, although there was stronger activity in the south of England than in the north.

Occupancy rates improved 4.7 percentage points to 66.8 per cent, still some way short of the market average of 71 or 72 per cent, but average room rates grew £1.29 to £42.29. That meant the rise in the yield – occupancy multiplied by average room rate – was ahead of the market, Mr Coppel said. In the Moat House division, yields were nearly 1.2 per cent up, but still below market levels.

The figures were boosted by a £25.1m profit on asset sales and £3.4m taken to the profit and loss account from the revaluation of the group's hotels.

This review, which was carried out by Jones Lang Wootton, showed the properties had fallen to £891m at the year end, but stripping out disposals made in 1994, the portfolio increased from £838m.

Nigel Cope

Booker, the food-processing and cash-and-carry group, yesterday played down speculation that it was set to bid for Nurdin & Peacock, the rival cash-and-carry operator.

Reporting an 11 per cent

rise in profits to £100m, Booker's chief executive, Charles Bowen, said: "Internal growth is our priority. The cash and food service division is growing very well and there are further efficiencies to be made."

Shares in Nurdin have been

rising recently on rumours that

Booker was set to strike.

The situation is complicated by a large

stake owned by the Peacock

family as well as a 14 per cent

stake controlled by the Dutch

group SHV Makro, which is

also thought keen to increase its

holding.

Analysts believe a Booker-

Booker plays down talk of imminent Nurdin bid

NIGEL COPE

Nurdin deal would make strategic sense, enabling Booker to reduce costs and close stores that overlapped. A bid at around 17p would value the company at £250m. Booker shares closed 13p higher at 395p. Nurdin's shares edged 4p higher at 172p.

Mr Bowen was sanguine about the possibility of Makro making a bid instead, which would leave Booker with a far larger competitor. "We are gaining market share from all our competitors. Even if SHV bought Nurdin we would be confident going up against it," he added.

Booker is the largest cash-

and-carry operator in the UK,

with 160 sites. It has outlets in

Portugal and seeks to expand in

other European markets and

the Far East. Nurdin is smaller

and has been changing its stores

into the TBW format.

Analysts believe a Booker-

December were at the top end of City expectations. Profits of £100m were struck on turnover 14 per cent higher at 17p would value the company at £250m. Booker shares closed 13p higher at 395p. Nurdin's shares edged 4p higher at 172p.

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Carey steps down at Slough

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Roger Carey is leaving Slough Estates, Britain's largest industrial landlord, after a boardroom reshuffle. In effect eliminated his job as managing director. The former president of the British Property Federation and one of the property industry's highest-profile figures, will leave the company at the end of April.

Mr Carey's departure follows the decision by Sir Nigel Mobs to split the roles of chairman and chief executive. His move to become executive chairman created a race for the chief executive's job, which was won by the finance director, Derek Wilson.

Both sides insisted that the parting of the ways was amicable and Mr Carey is not expected to receive any compensation. He plans to keep working in the property business but has no concrete plans.

News of the boardroom changes, which bring Slough Estates into line with Cadbury committee recommendations, accompanied full-year figures showing an 11 per cent rise in profit before tax to £70.7m. The more important measure of net asset value per share declined during the year, however, by 3.6 per cent to 266p.

Sounding a more optimistic note than for some time, Sir Nigel said: "The past year has seen further progress in the achievement of strategic objectives, particularly the continuing improvement in occupancy." As a result the dividend was nudged up 4.9 per cent to 8.5p a share.

Slough's total portfolio was valued at £1.78bn at the end of 1995, a 3.1 per cent decline on a year earlier. The biggest hit was in the UK, where values fell almost 5 per cent, led by a 7.3 per cent fall in the value of Slough's offices. Retail properties fell by 5.6 per cent while the core industrial estate, which accounts for 58 per cent of the total portfolio, slipped by 3.9 per cent. The UK portfolio is currently rented at levels estimated to be 78 per cent higher than those that would be achievable on the open market. That represents a slight improvement on the over-renting of 8.5 per cent at the end of 1994.

Blue Circle builds on upturn

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

There is no doubt Blue Circle has an excellent cement business and it is currently benefiting from some pretty buoyant construction markets around the world.

Even in the depressed UK, its command of half the market means it can maintain the industry's prices at a level which keeps out imports and yet still makes enviable margins of over 20 per cent.

Despite a 3 per cent dip in volumes, UK cement profits rose an impressive 1.9 per cent to £65.3m last year. What Blue Circle can do when markets really take off was illustrated by last year's performance overseas. Buoyant demand in the US, Chile and Malaysia saw profit rises ranging between 29 per cent and 37 per cent in those regions.

The benefits of this general upturn in the cycle shone through in group profits, which leapt from £18.4m to £26.4m in the year to December, despite being complicated by exceptional. The 1994 charge of £59.4m – mostly the loss on the sale of the New World coolers business – was cut to £9m in 1995.

While Blue Circle has shown it can manage the core business, its diversification strategy has been disastrous. Fresh from sorting out the Armitage Shanks bathrooms division, it is now having to tackle the bigger problems of its boilers-to-radiators heating offshoot, including Myson and Potterton in the UK. A restructuring announced last month is meant to deliver cost savings of £25m by next year, but that will still leave returns well short of the targeted 15 per cent return on £550m of capital employed in heating, after profits collapsed from £42.4m to £17.1m in 1995.

The cement cycle would appear to have a little more steam left in it. UK cement volumes have yet to show any recovery from the 16 per cent fall registered in the second half of last year, but there is good reason to agree with Blue Circle that the market will pick up later this year.

Construction orders up 20 per cent in the three months to January and recent plans by housebuilders to significantly raise output must feed through to cement demand eventually.

Add to that price rises of over 4 per cent to be posted next month and there should be some growth this year.

Overseas, the US could now hit a plateau, but any decline from here is likely to be gentle. More questionable is whether last year's boom in Chile and the Far East can be maintained without attracting competition or being killed off by the onset of extra capacity. Blue Circle plans to use its minimal gearing and formidable cash

flow for acquisitions. Given the record, that should worry investors.

At 333p, up 10p, the shares are fairly rated on a forward price/earnings ratio of 14, assuming profits just short of £300m this year.

Next still offers rich rewards

Next's market-beating record has become so predictable that even David Jones, the retailer's chief executive, seems to be having difficulty in finding his own results interesting. What was once the high street's great recovery story has become a tale of consistent growth that puts the rest of the sector in the shade. Pre-exceptional profits were up 25 per cent to £125m with high street stores and the Next Directory putting in sterling performances. Disposals boosted the pre-tax figure to £142m.

It is testing a personal loan scheme to its Directory customers which is utilising £10m of cash. If rolled out it might use up £50m, but that would still leave a chunky war chest. All this hints at acquisitions and Lord Wolfson, chairman, admits that he likes to have the heady 12 per cent since the year-end.

After shaving the margin to boost sales over the last two years Next is keeping the return on sales constant on like-for-like turnover that is still increasing at a heady 12 per cent since the year-end.

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COMMENT

'BT's Sir Iain Vallance is just desperate to do this deal. At one stroke it gives BT the scale in international markets it needs as well as filling an obvious hole in its international spread - the Far East'

Stock market rumours as strong as those swirling around Cable & Wireless yesterday usually turn out to be true. Notwithstanding persistent denials of talks with BT over the past two weeks, C&W was last night forced to confirm that the market was indeed right all along. Talks over the mother of all takeovers are underway, and, by all accounts, quite near to fruition.

This is a deal that makes eminent sense for both BT and C & W. Plainly there are very substantial regulatory barriers, but none of them are insurmountable in the case of an agreed deal with ministerial backing. Mercury must be sold, or it will make a nonsense of a decade of attempts to increase competition in the UK domestic market. But there are bound to be willing buyers, including, probably, AT&T, whose presence would step up, not undermine, competition. The chief obstacle is not in any case the regulators, but the power vacuum at the top of C&W. The chairman is new to the job and the chief executive only a caretaker. Perhaps understandably, neither is inclined to take responsibility for such a fundamental decision.

BT's Sir Iain Vallance is just desperate to do this deal. At a stroke it gives BT the scale in international markets it needs as well as filling an obvious hole in its international spread - the Far East. With luck, it should also revive BT's flagging share price by giving the company new impetus outside the UK's regulatory yoke.

The terms talked of in the stock market yesterday - three BT shares and 60p in cash for every C&W share - could easily be made to add up to 600p a share if the market takes a shine to the deal. That in turn would allow C&W to agree the takeover with honour.

Valdes leaves the British unimpressed

It was hard for British investors to know whether to laugh or cry yesterday at an attempt by Charles Valdes of Calpers, the \$100bn California pension fund, to ginger up British corporate governance.

After the Cadbury and Greenbury reports, not to speak of the Hampel Committee, which is just starting its work, Mr Valdes seems to have descended from another planet. Or as one big institution preferred to put it, 'Has this guy been in a submarine for three years?'

Nobody would pretend that corporate governance in the UK is anywhere near perfect. Governance fatigue, as the CBI puts it, has more to do with the amount of verbiage expended on it in the last five years than with actual results.

In that respect, at least, Britain must now be the most active exponent of corporate governance in the world.

Mr Valdes is head of investment at Calpers, a celebrated pioneer of the use of

shareholder pressure against underperforming companies, and publisher of a blacklist of those at the bottom of the class.

Mr Valdes said stock prices of companies targeted by Calpers trailed the index by 75 per cent in the previous five years, and outperformed in the subsequent five years by 54 per cent, an annual return of \$150m for the effort.

Calpers has more money abroad - \$20bn by the end of next year - than any other US pension fund, mainly in Japan, the UK, France and Germany. So it is extending its corporate governance policies overseas, and that includes us.

After careful study Mr Valdes has thankfully come to the conclusion that policy should be tailored separately to the customs of each of these markets. But it is hard to believe that Mr Valdes is yet in touch with what is happening in the UK.

He wants UK institutions to set up a corporate governance body to improve underperforming companies. This is unlikely to impress the investment committees of the National Association of Pension Funds and the Association of British Insurers, which between them cover half of UK equities. They have been in the thick of Cadbury and Greenbury for five years.

Mr Valdes' specially tailored proposal for the UK is that a set of corporate governance principles should be developed here, including a statement that all UK corporations should adhere to the Cadbury and

Greenbury code of best practices. Since the Stock Exchange yellow book already incorporates chunks of both, this sounded quaintly out of touch to his listeners at a London conference.

UK institutions have a deep dislike of public action against companies, so it is often hard to tell whether their role is all they crack it up to be. But substantial numbers have for years done behind the scenes exactly what Calpers does so very publicly.

The UK can certainly improve its methods in this area, but it is not clear from yesterday's contribution that Calpers' advice is what it needs.

A lot of splashing at United Utilities

Since when did the announcement of \$250m job losses become an occasion for cheer-leading self-congratulation? Since North West Water took over its contiguous electricity distribution company, Norweb, seems to be the answer.

Yes - proclaims Sir Desmond Pitcher, chairman of the merged company, now grandly renamed United Utilities - the scope for job losses and cost cuts is even greater than we had anticipated. Another 1,700 jobs are to go on top of the 800 already planned.

Needless to say, the glee with which Sir

Desmond delivered this message was not

aimed at United's hapless workforce, but at the City, where there is still some scepticism about the supposed benefits of this merger. All you sceptics are going to be proved wrong, was his breathless message. By the turn of the century, earnings enhancement will be a whopping £140m per annum, 40 per cent higher than forecast when the acquisition of Norweb was being planned. And as a consequence, we can now commit to 11 per cent real dividend growth, Sir Desmond says.

The UK can certainly improve its methods in this area, but it is not clear from yesterday's contribution that Calpers' advice is what it needs.

In Sir Desmond's mind there's no doubt about it. If the City lets him, there will be another utility acquisition before too long. There is one heartening aspect to all this empire-building, however - a strategic backdown from non-core businesses. Out goes retailing, contracting, process equipment and generation. Instead, the company is to focus entirely on being a utility service provider. An even narrower focus, on water, might ultimately have served shareholders better.

Jacques Vert chief resigns as group dives into red

NIGEL COPE

Jacques Vert, the troubled upmarket women's wear group, announced the departure of its chief executive yesterday alongside its second profits warning of the year and the withdrawal of the dividend payment.

The retailer and wholesaler, which specialises in "occasionwear" for weddings and parties, said it would make "a substantial loss" in its current year instead of the break-even City analysts were expecting. The shares, trading at more than 20p six months ago, lost 38 per cent of their value yesterday to close at 7p.

David Tiedeman, chief executive, is leaving the company after only a year in the job.

He was on a two-year contract and is thought to be in line for compensation of up to £220,000.

Though most of his share options are worthless due to the collapse in the company's share price, he does have 55,000 options granted at 44p.

He will be replaced by Bill Reid who is to become executive chairman. Brian Heilbron, commercial director, will move up to chief operating officer.

The company blamed the warning on a string of problems, many of which have been dogging the group for the past year. The hot summer last year affected sales of the group's more formal clothing.

It has also experienced production difficulties at its factory in the North-East and blamed

tough trading on the high street and supplier delivery problems.

Since January the late delivery of cloth and other raw materials has delayed the production of garments which meant customer orders could not be satisfied.

A new computer system, due to have been fully installed by December has been dogged by teething problems, affecting distribution and service to wholesale customers.

Jacques Vert has been unable to deliver complete product ranges to customers either through its own stores or the concessions it operates in department stores.

The company said like-for-like sales were lower than last year which would mean a substantial loss for the year ending 27 April.

The company has decided not to pay a final dividend and to withdraw the previously announced interim payout of 2.25p per share.

It is also in discussions with its bankers about extending its facilities which only run until September. Though it is within its borrowing limits, bank debts have risen above previously forecast levels.

The company is now planning to cut costs and borrowings. "Unprofitable retail units will be reviewed and closed if necessary where it is not anticipated that a satisfactory performance can be restored," the company said.

Jacques Vert was founded by Jack Cynamon and Alan



Change of style: David Tiedeman (left), chief executive, is to leave Jacques Vert after only a year in office. Alan Green (right), a co-founder of the company, stepped back from the day-to-day running of Jacques Vert a year ago

Green. Both have stepped back from the day-to-day running of the company in the last two years and the handover has not proved a happy one.

Only six months ago the shares stood at 20p and the City was looking to re-rate the company as more of a retailer than a rag trade fashion group.

Last November it announced plans to open 50 concessions within House of Fraser's department stores to boost sales.

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GRAND NATIONAL MEETING: Novice victory gives trainer swift compensation after big-race fancy Lo Stregone is sidelined

Ask Tom wipes away Tate's tears

GREG WOOD
reports from Aintree

As any punter knows, as long as a single penny remains in your pocket, there is hope, so swiftly can your fortunes ebb and flow. Tom Tate knows it too, after a day which started with the trainer close to tears, and by mid-afternoon had seen him secure one of the most valuable successes of his career.

It was early yesterday morning when a suspicion which had been growing in Tate's mind for 24 hours was finally confirmed. Lo Stregone, second-favourite for tomorrow's Grand National, had finally caught the equine 'flu' which had passed through every other horse in the yard during the course of the season. "He had

a temperature of 103 last night and again this morning and he is a sick horse," Tate said before setting off for Aintree. "It's a bit of an anti-climax to say the least, and I could cry."

But just a few hours later, fortune shifted straight through the gears from reverse to fifth. Ask Tom started at 10-1 for the Magnifico Novices' Chase after a poor run at Cheltenham two weeks ago, but Tate had long been convinced that his horse was a potential champion and his faith was conclusively rewarded with a 15-length defeat of Lord Dorset.

"He had the same virus that Lo Stregone has got about four weeks before the Cheltenham," Tate said, "and while he was not performing poorly in his most recent outing, but yesterday he was 100% fit, it takes a race to put them right again. 'When I bought the horse he

was already named. I rang Brian Stewart-Brown and said I'd found a good one. He asked what it was called and when I told him he laughed and said 'we'd better have it then'."

The winning jockey on Ask Tom was Peter Niven, a late re-

placement for Jamie Osborne, who had broken his collar-bone in a fall from Black Humour in the previous race, the Marcelli Cup. The winner of this race too had performed poorly in his most recent outing, but yesterday Scuton Banks not only returned to form, but appeared

capable of a serious challenge for next year's Gold Cup.

For much of the contest, Scuton Banks was engaged in a private duel with Barton Bank, which ended only when the latter made one of his trademark mistakes at the final fence.

"Both times we went down the back he was dosing a bit," Loran Wyer, Scuton Banks's jockey, said, "and the second time I didn't think we would win. But Barton Bank missed the fourth-last and that let me get back into contention. It's very early to be talking about the Gold Cup, but if all goes well up there with a chance."

Barton Bank's jockey yesterday was Tony McCoy, whose exceptional adhesive qualities were demonstrated several times during the afternoon. His strength

in a finish was in evidence too, when he brought Top Spin to win on the nod in the final race, a success which completed a double after his victory on Zabadi in the juvenile hurdle.

Even so, the riding performance of the day was that of Paul Carberry, who put several unfortunate experiences over the National fences behind him to take to John Hughes Chase on Joe White, a 33-1 chance.

Perhaps inevitably, Carberry has rarely been mentioned in his career to date without reference to his father, Tommy, a National winner on L'Escarot. Carberry junior, though, is now a very fine rider himself, and his assurance on Joe White, as the winning post accelerated towards him with Go Universal still in front, was magnificent.

"I thought I'd definitely beat

them as soon as we'd jumped the last," Carberry said afterwards, "it just took me a little longer than I thought to do it."

The jockey is due to partner Three Browns, a rank outsider, in the National tomorrow, but may miss the ride after his own run of luck came to a sudden halt. He sprained a knee when hampered and brought down on Edelweiss Du Moulin in the next race, and must pass the doctor this morning if he is to ride in the afternoon.

It is the amateurs' turn over the big fences today in the Fox Hunters' Chase, but as ever this is a hopeless event for punters. Concentrate instead on the preceding events, in which Klarion Davis (235), Hill Of Tulow (next best 3-10) and ALLTIME DANCER (nap 2.00) in particular must go well.

Champion supports National underdogs

Bob Champion, winner of an emotion-packed Grand National on Aldaniti 15 years ago, believes that the conditions that now apply to runners in the race are reducing the spectacle of the world's most famous steeplechase.

Speaking at Aintree yesterday, Champion said: "It's such a shame that there will be so few runners this year because I think that this detracts from the spectacle the race provides for the public."

Barry further mishap or injury, 28 runners will line up in tomorrow's race - the smallest since Gay Trip beat 27 others in 1970. Champion believes that figure would be boosted if it were not for the restrictive race conditions.

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Brigadier Roscoe Harvey DSO, one of the most popular post-war figures in National Hunt racing, died early yesterday morning at his Gloucestershire home, aged 95.

He rode as an amateur in Britain between 1923 and 1926 and in Egypt and India until the

handicap - that would get rid of the no-hoppers," the former jockey, now a trainer, said.

Killeskin would have been one of the favourites for the race and was a good winner of the Eider, yet he can't get into the race. It should be just an open handicap," he added.

Despite the withdrawal of Lo Stregone yesterday, Rough Quest, the favourite, actually eased in the market with the major bookmakers. He is now a top-priced 11-2, from 5-1, with William Hill. That firm now has Superior Finish as the 11-2 joint-favourite, from 7-1 and reported a flood of money for that Jenny Pitman-trained horse since Richard Dunwoody was booked for the ride.

The crowd at yesterday's opening day of the Grand National meeting was 13,374, down 814 on last year's record first day attendance.

Roscoe Harvey dies at 92

Brigadier Roscoe Harvey DSO, one of the most popular post-war figures in National Hunt racing, died early yesterday morning at his Gloucestershire home, aged 95.

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Obituary, page 22

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Obituary, page 22

The owner of the two-time Champion Chase at Cheltenham has a good record in the event and Klarion Davis could just be the value bet today if all his wins have been in the mud. The Arkle winner from Smeds Park the previous season, Klarion Davis outdistanced Viking Fliegard for a five-length win 16 days ago with Sir Michael Stoute in the saddle. Klarion Davis will be the 100-1 outsider for the race, but the confidence booster following two falls. He will have the first ground and runs here instead of trying to repeat his heroics won in the two-rider at this fixture 12 months ago. The way Klarion Davis won at Cheltenham suggests he will run longer journey and Sound Man and Viking Fliegard will have to be better than at Aintree to beat him. Outgoing champion Red Rum is a 100-1 outsider. David Soper has a good record in the last two years. His partner at Cheltenham let him down this year with costly falls at two of the first three fences, and the ground could prove too fast for him. The sharp course will sort Sound Man, but he blundered around Cheltenham a fortnight ago, and while he has winning form at this type of distance, Klarion Davis should again have his measure.

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Star made by the 10 wise men

If Mark Chaloner wins the World Squash Championships — and many people are saying that it is not a matter of if, but when — his victory speech is likely to take quite some time.

The man who turned Mark Chaloner, squash player, into Mark Chaloner Ltd is his manager and coach, John Milton. "It all started when Mark was 18. I was coaching the Herisjuniors at the time. He came to see me and said: 'I want to turn professional: what do I do? I didn't know.'

Unfettered by traditional thinking, Milton talked to lots of people, from Steve Overt's coach, Harry Wilson, to the former squash world champion Jonah Barrington. But his real inspiration came from football. "I realised it is basically business. However talented a person, he can't manage every aspect. You have to find the right person, someone with specific skills but in tune with you." Basic stuff, perhaps, but for squash it was revolutionary.

Milton sought four key people: a psychologist; a physio; a masseur; and a scientist. It took nearly four years to find the right combination. Now the formula has added extra ingredients. Milton has reinforced the team and set up Prospects Squash Management, which aims to give the same specialist approach to other rising stars.

It is a business, and the players are the product. "For example, we set targets for Mark to achieve. And like any business, everything doesn't always go right. He had some good results between 18 and 22, but never really showed the kind of form consistently that he has achieved in the past 12 months."

At one stage, Chaloner came close to giving up, but as Milton moulded his team together, his theory turned into practice. Chaloner suddenly came good. He won the British Under-23 Championships in 1994, and has not looked back. "There are aspects of his game that he needs to work on, but I am certain that he will apply himself to them and he has the willpower to get through," Milton said.

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It might appear that sports psychologist Alfred Jones, from Horsham, Surrey, had finished his work now that Mark has overcome his own mental barriers. Under his influence, Chaloner has risen from 87th in the world to ninth. But Jones says a new set of challenges face their protégé. "The difference between a very good player and a champion is that the champion wins when he is not playing well."

Many potentially great players do not succeed because external problems, mainly money, affect their concentration worse than someone with hiccups at a snooker final. Milton

has surrounded Chaloner with people to remove these worries. For example, Grays supplies his equipment while ICL gives him support on travelling, a retainer and an achievement bonus. Norman Elliott, the director of finance for ICL Software Europe, first saw Chaloner as a junior player in the Herts League. "It was clear he was going places, but just as important to us was the way he handled himself. He was the sort of person we wanted to be associated with."

These sentiments are echoed by Richard Gray, marketing manager for Grays of Cambridge. "Mark plays a key role in adapting our range of rackets." Chaloner could earn as much as £50,000 this year if he continues to progress. That may be shoelace sponsorship for tennis professionals but it is pretty good money for a squash player.

A financial adviser, Ray Milton, is guiding him through these years of relative poverty (Chaloner earned less than £18,000 last year), but ensuring the money is wisely invested in

he joins the big earners and, with a relatively short earning span, it is important that Chaloner's potential is maximised. That is the job of management consultant Andy Mawson. Marketing Mark, meanwhile, is down to Mike Osborne.

Ed Winter, who is responsible for exercise physiology at Bedford University, assesses Chaloner's strengths and weaknesses about four times a year.

"He is young and still developing, but his prospects are excellent." Both physio Mike Verney and the final team member, masseur Peter King, concur.

"There are much bigger guys

that I treat who can't take treatment at the depth Mark likes me to work. I can see him coming on in leaps and bounds," King says.

A gimmick, or a professional approach to a sport renowned for its amateur approach? Milton says: "Squash is a very irregular sport. It doesn't look outside itself enough. Some of the world's top 10 players are not earning what Mark is getting. But this is only the start."



KEITH ELLIOTT
at large



Chaloner: Taking care of business. Photograph: Peter Jay

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Teenagers oust Boxall and Cooper

Tim Glover sees the semi-final line-up settled in golf's Sunningdale Foursomes

About the only thing that changes over the Old Course are the names of the winners of the Sunningdale Foursomes. Nearly 70 years ago Bob Jones shot 66 here and he would still remember every hole. He would probably also recognise the menu, the only concession to modern developments being a reassurance that the beef comes from the "finest Scottish herds grazed naturally". As for humble pie, the recipe is as it always was.

Reputations count for nothing. Yesterday morning, in the fourth round of the 55th Foursomes, Richard Boxall and Derrick Cooper, defending champions, were sent packing by a couple of teenagers. But then this championship, played by young and old, amateur and professional, male and female, prize rooster and feather duster, is a timely reminder that golf is perhaps the most humbling of sports.

Last Sunday the Australian Wayne Riley was being feted as the Portuguese Open champion in Lisbon, confirmation that he is now a serious contender following his victory in the Scottish Open at Carnoustie last summer.

Riley, who won £4,000 in Portugal, paid a modest entry fee to play in the Sunningdale Foursomes and yesterday he, too, shook hands with humility.

Riley, who has a house in Camberley, Surrey, partnered Gary Smith, the professional at Camberley Heath. Smith coaches Riley and Boxall so yesterday was not exactly the most memorable day of his career. Sean Whiffin, a professional at Enfield, and his amateur partner, Jeremy Jones, were four up after 12 holes before Riley and Smith, in tandem with pendulum putters, restored the balance.

The match went to extra holes and at the 20th Riley's 10-foot putt

for victory bobbed alarmingly and kicked left. The end came at the 21st, the short par-four third, where Smith left his pitch shot woefully short and Jones chipped to within four feet of the flag, enabling his partner to win the hole and the match with a birdie three. Alas Smith and Riley.

Boxall and Cooper, seasoned campaigners on the European Tour, were given short shrift by a couple of amateurs not yet old enough to understand the coincidence of nerves with a four-foot putt. Luke Donald, 18, from Beaconsfield, and Michael O'Connor, 19, from Stoke Poges, were in receipt of two strokes from Boxall and Cooper but it was a superfluous advantage.

Donald and O'Connor won four of the first five holes and Boxall and Cooper were put out to grass at the 14th. The teenagers finished in style, Donald holing a 10-foot putt for an eagle three to secure a handsome 5 and 4 win. Donald and O'Connor took an even shorter cut, putting out Kempton's Warren Bradon and Gareth Jenkins 7 and 5 in the quarter-finals.

This morning Donald and O'Connor meet Whiffin and Jones in the semi-finals. In the other semi, the Scottish pairing of tour professionals Gillian Stewart and Julie Forbes play John Morgan and Mark Landrum. Stewart, a beaten finalist in 1987, has the assistance here this week of Ian Wright, the former caddie to Seve Ballesteros.

Stewart and Forbes were two down after two against Richard Hurst and Trevor Paterson and were one down playing the 16th. They won the hole with the benefit of a shot off the handicap and won the 18th and the match with a five to a six after their opponents had been bunkered. Humble pie was also on the supper menu. Scores, Sporting Digest, page 31.

Ballesteros has to withdraw

Seve Ballesteros was forced to withdraw after playing only 10 holes of the Players' Championship at Ponte Vedra Beach in Florida yesterday.

The Spaniard, who is languishing in 174th place in the European Order of Merit after playing only two events on this season's tour, suffered more problems with his back.

Ballesteros, winner of three Opens and two US Masters, reported that his back, which had forced him recently to take a five-month break from golf, felt fine on the range and did not tighten up until he had hit his sixth tee shot.

"I can't swing the club. I couldn't get it far enough back and couldn't swing it forward," he said. Ballesteros still hopes to play next week in Atlanta and at the Masters the following week.

Ballesteros, recently named captain of the European Ryder Cup team, shot 41 for his first nine and then bogeyed the 10th hole to stand six over par when he pulled out.

In Santo da Serra, England's Paul Lyons at last made a name

for himself on the European circuit when he took a share of the first-round lead in the Madeira Island Open.

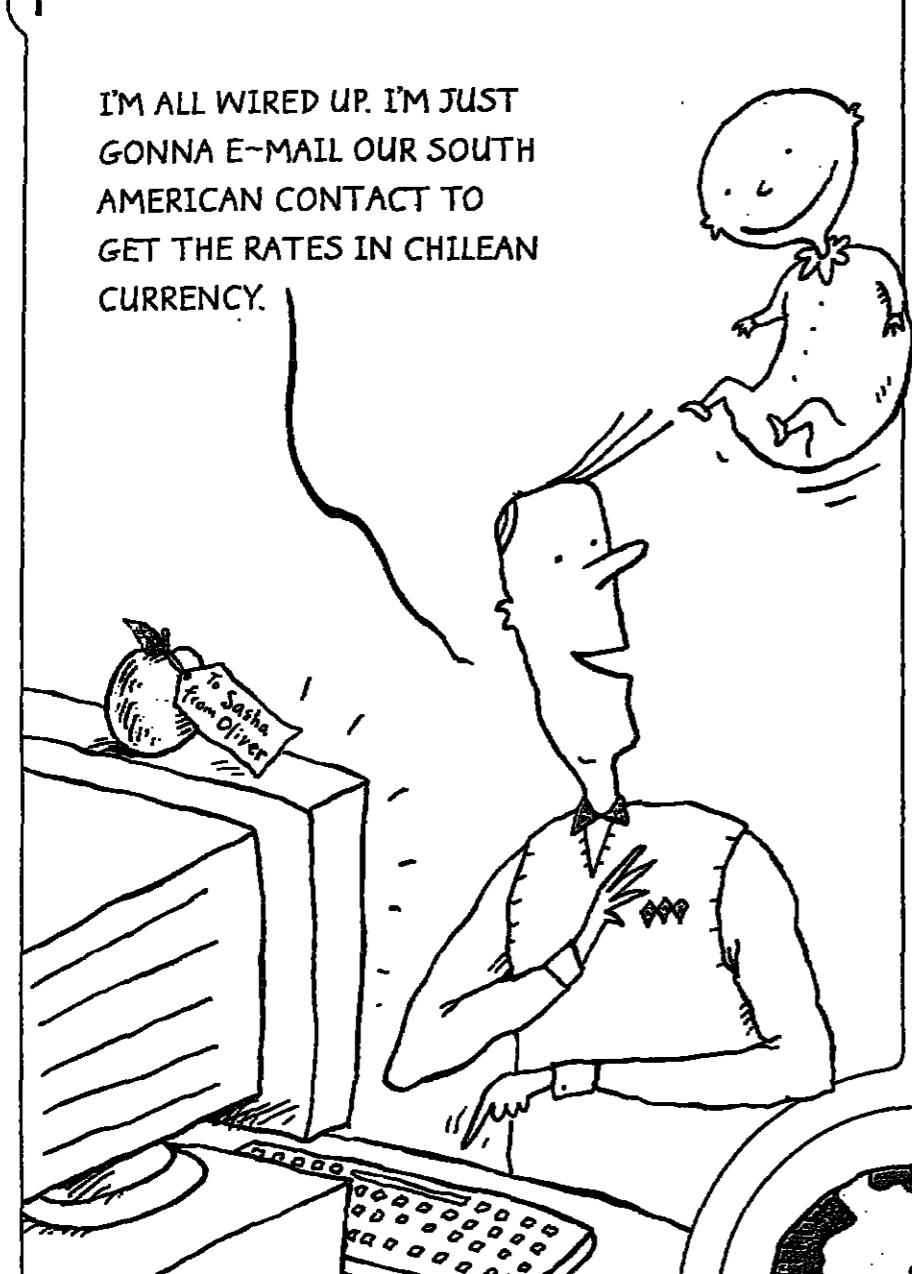
The 29-year-old from Bromley, playing only his fourth tour event in a professional career dating back to 1987, had an eagle and five birdies in a four-under-par 68, which on a blustery day was good enough to put him alongside another Englishman, Ross McFarlane, in the race for the £50,000 first prize.

TODAY'S NUMBER

15

The age of Paul Lee who yesterday became the youngest speedway rider in the world to be on an official contract when he joined Peterborough. The Nottingham teenager will ride for the Panthers' second team.

1
I'M ALL WIRED UP. I'M JUST GONNA E-MAIL OUR SOUTH AMERICAN CONTACT TO GET THE RATES IN CHILEAN CURRENCY.



2
MINUTES LATER...
UH-OH. I MUST HAVE PRESSED THE WRONG BUTTON. SOMEONE'S SENT ME A RECIPE FOR CHILLI CON CARNE.



3
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When mankind meets machine, Mercury can help.

Hughes focuses on his chance to make history

There are those Chelsea players for whom Wembley 1994 remains such a bitter memory that even now, two years on, they find it impossible to watch a recording of the game. For Mark Hughes there is no play-back pain, a goal and a 4-0 victory granting Manchester United a Double celebration.

Two other winning Cup final occasions swell the video collection in the Hughes household. One more and he will have

achieved something no other player this century can lay claim to, and as fate would have it the side who at Villa Park on Sunday obstructed his Wembley return and a shot at a historic third winner's medal is the one he left behind last summer.

It is a mark of the man and the service he guaranteed through many campaigns that letters of appreciation from United supporters doubled the daily load of the postman who calls at the Chelsea training ground. The flood of corre-

Obstructing the Chelsea striker's pursuit of FA Cup glory in Sunday's semi-final is his former club. Trevor Haylett reports

spondence has stopped these past two weeks, but that is only to be expected. Of all the aspects to semi-final day, sentiment is not one of them.

Hughes, the arch competitor, would have it no other way. "Because of my affection for United this could have been a difficult game for me but they're the team standing in the way of me getting to Wembley and to

there can be no divided loyalties as far as I am concerned."

The chance of Chelsea making

it will rise considerably if the strong man at the head of their attack shakes off a calf strain, a legacy of the quarter-final against Wimbledon. According to Glenn Hoddle, the Chelsea manager, it was a game that best showed what Hughes is all about: skill, aggression and to-

tal commitment and woe betide any injury that dares come between Hughes and his destiny.

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ment, the one whose ability to

retain possession frees runners and enables Ruud Gullit to prime those extravagant, laser-accurate passes. "Mark's experience and big-game pedigree have been important to us all this season," Hoddle said simply.

At 32, Hughes's desire re- mains as intense as when he first emerged at Old Trafford 13 years ago. Frequently it carries him over the line of acceptability, and an appearance before the Football Association next week to explain the indiscretions which have accumu-

lated 45 disciplinary points that could put his appearance at Wembley in jeopardy.

It is one facet of his game that has disappointed him since he

arrived at Stamford Bridge.

That and scoring goals. He has

eight but knows it is insufficient

in a side short of marksmen.

"It's different at United

where the goals tend to be

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It is a mark of the man and the service he guaranteed through many campaigns that letters of appreciation from United supporters doubled the daily load of the postman who calls at the Chelsea training ground. The flood of corre-

spondence has stopped these past two weeks, but that is only to be expected. Of all the aspects to semi-final day, sentiment is not one of them.

Hughes, the arch competitor, would have it no other way. "Because of my affection for United this could have been a difficult game for me but they're the team standing in the way of me getting to Wembley and to

there can be no divided loyalties as far as I am concerned."

The chance of Chelsea making it will rise considerably if the strong man at the head of their attack shakes off a calf strain, a legacy of the quarter-final against Wimbledon. According to Glenn Hoddle, the Chelsea manager, it was a game that best

showed what Hughes is all about: skill, aggression and to-

tal commitment and woe betide any injury that dares come between Hughes and his destiny.

"This is a big, big game for me

and it would be disappointing not

to make it, but the muscle feels

better than it did at the weekend

and I should be all right."

As the focal point of their

link-up play, Hughes has been

crucial to Chelsea's improvement, the one whose ability to

retain possession frees runners and enables Ruud Gullit to prime those extravagant, laser-accurate passes. "Mark's experience and big-game pedigree have been important to us all this season," Hoddle said simply.

At 32, Hughes's desire remains as intense as when he first emerged at Old Trafford 13 years ago. Frequently it carries him over the line of acceptability, and an appearance before the Football Association next week to explain the indiscretions which have accumu-

lated 45 disciplinary points that could put his appearance at Wembley in jeopardy.

It is one facet of his game that has disappointed him since he

arrived at Stamford Bridge.

That and scoring goals. He has

eight but knows it is insufficient

in a side short of marksmen.

"It's different at United

where the goals tend to be

spread around the team. Apart

from Eric [Cantona] there's

Ryan [Giggs], Lee Sharpe and

so many others. Andy Cole has

taken stick unfairly for his

chances he has missed. He has contributed a lot with his work outside the box, and I just hope he doesn't take it out on us by knocking one in on Sunday."

Two other winning Cup final occasions swell the video collection in the Hughes house-

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SPORT

Peschisolido's return enlivens quiet deadline day

Football

GUY HODGSON

Transfer deadline day, traditionally a fevered rush to get players registered, passed with almost eerie tranquillity yesterday. Typical of the mood, the one record that was broken belonged to non-League Rushden & Diamonds.

The total amount of money exchanging hands was less than £1m which concurs with the less

than dramatic trend of recent years and the highest price was the £1.4m Manchester City paid for the German international striker Mikhail Kavelashvili.

The prize for the most intriguing move went to Paul Peschisolido whose £600,000 transfer from Stoke went through two minutes before the 5pm deadline. His destination is Birmingham City and his wife-cum-managing director, Karen Brady.

Other than that the highest

profile transfer was at Blackburn Rovers, where the manager, Ray Harford, took his spending in the past week to just £4m by signing Grimsby Town's Gary Croft. The 22-year-old defender, who can play either as a left-back or central defender, cost an initial £1m which could rise by another £700,000, and follows the £2.2m purchase of Gary Flitcroft from Manchester City.

Strangely, the chief activity centred at a place where trans-

fers were pursued but none took place. Leeds United turned down a £3.5m bid for Gary Speed from Everton and a £1m deal for Rod Wallace to rejoin Southampton fell through.

Speed, 36 and a boyhood Everton fan, has been the subject of enquiries from Goodison before, but yesterday's bid was the firmest and most substantial. It is understood that Joe Royle's offer made it past the "no chance" stage of negotia-

tion to the Leeds board where it was rejected partly because of a fear of fans' reaction in the wake of the Coca-Cola Cup final defeat. Even so, Howard Wilkinson, who has vowed to stay on as manager, is planning a clear-out.

"I have never been a quitter. I have never run away from a problem in my life and I don't intend running away from this one," Wilkinson said.

Southampton's interest in

Wallace, which broke down because of the player's reluctance to return to The Dell, conformed to type as there was transfer activity at the bottom of the Premiership. Bolton paid Bradford City £300,000 for goalkeeper Gavin Ward while West Ham also bought a new

goalkeeper, Australian Steve Mautone, from Canberra Cosmos for £30,000. In the First Division, Charlton collected £250,000 by selling Kim Grant to Luton.

As for Rushden & Diamonds,

Williams dispute Senna findings

Motor racing

Patrick Head, the technical chief of Williams Formula One team, has disputed the official findings of the inquiry into the death of Ayrton Senna at the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix at Imola which blames steering failure for the fatal accident.

The report says the steering column on the three-times world champion's Williams suffered metal fatigue and only a small part of it was intact when he lost control of the car and crashed into a wall. Head disputes that. "We haven't had the opportunity to look at any of the parts properly, but it [the conclusion] would not tie in with the data we have from the car," he said.

He said in an interview with *Autosport* magazine that he is not questioning the expertise of those who compiled the report, but he added: "The technical report states in black and white that the data on the car indicates that the steering was working correctly at the time of impact. And then at the end it says the car must have gone off the track because the driver couldn't steer. It doesn't try to say how the data does not tie in with their judgement."

The inquiry's findings have yet to be published, but Professor Enrico Lorenzini, chairman of the official investigating commission, has confirmed its contents.

Head concedes that there must have been fatigue cracks in the steering column of Senna's car. "The people who did the material analysis are too capable to identify cracks and for there not to be cracks there," he says.

Noting that many jumbo jets fly despite showing fatigue cracks, he said it was a matter of "whether they are present to the extent to actually put a component at risk."

Head was at pains to quash rumours that a modification to the car's steering column had contributed to the accident. He said it had been done 10 days before the season started and scrutinised after the Pacific Grand Prix, when the car had been hit by Nicola Larini's.

The steering column was subjected to a very careful fatigue crack detection in the factory and no cracks were found on it," he said.

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Emburey out of running for England post

Cricket

DAVID LLEWELLYN

John Emburey has pulled out of the running for the job of England coach. The 43-year-old former England and Middlesex off-spinner, who was believed to have been the choice of Ray Illingworth, the chairman of selectors, informed the Test and County Cricket Board of his decision yesterday.

That leaves the way clear for the other two contenders: the favourite, David Lloyd, who is in Jamaica on Lancashire's pre-season tour; and Phil Neale, Warwickshire's director of coaching.

Neale, 41, who captained Worcestershire to successive County Championship wins in 1988 and 1989, said yesterday from Cape Town, where he is helping Warwickshire prepare for their pre-season tour, that he wants the job. "I would love to be involved in the England set-up in some way," he said.

The TCCB chairman, Dennis Silk, had announced that a decision would be made by this evening, but that is not guaranteed. With two of the leading candidates out of the country it may not be possible, although after the last 10 days or so no one should be surprised at anything after this latest episode in the soap opera of English cricket. The weekly serial will no doubt throw up another twist next week.

But unlike David Graveney's exit from the election for chair-

man of selectors, Emburey was not put under any pressure by anyone else. He has just taken up a four-year post as coach to Northamptonshire, believed to be worth a total of £200,000.

The TCCB, who approached Emburey on Tuesday to establish whether he was willing to be considered for the post, have made it clear that the England coach's job will be just for the summer. Even if it paid £30,000 for those six months, it would not make financial sense for Emburey to accept it on those terms when there is so much more security with Northamptonshire, who said that they would not have stood in Emburey's way had he been offered the job.

Lloyd, at 49 is the oldest of the candidates and he is believed to be on a short-term contract with Lancashire, so the brevity of the England deal would probably not worry him unduly, particularly since it is likely that Lancashire would leave his job open for him if Lloyd failed to produce the goods. A major factor in his favour is that if Lloyd were offered the job it might well interest Michael Atherton to stay on as England captain, and Lord's want that very much particularly since there is no obvious successor.

Illingworth did not want to comment on Emburey's decision, which was announced through his new county. In the statement Emburey, who last night flew to South Africa for

a 12-day pre-season tour with Northamptonshire, said: "While being very honoured and flattered at being considered by the TCCB's executive committee I have decided after due and careful thought, that I do not wish to be put forward as a candidate.

"I feel at this stage of my career that I would benefit from gaining more experience in a cricket management and coaching role. Having gained that necessary experience I would be better qualified to serve England. It is my fervent desire and ambition to work with the international team at some time in the future and I fully appreciate the experience of managing the England A team on their recent tour of Pakistan.

Unlike Emburey, who played 64 times for England, Neale has no Test experience, but he said: "I took England A to South Africa and India and it didn't stop me doing a good job. I didn't think I was lacking anything when it came to knowledge of cricket."

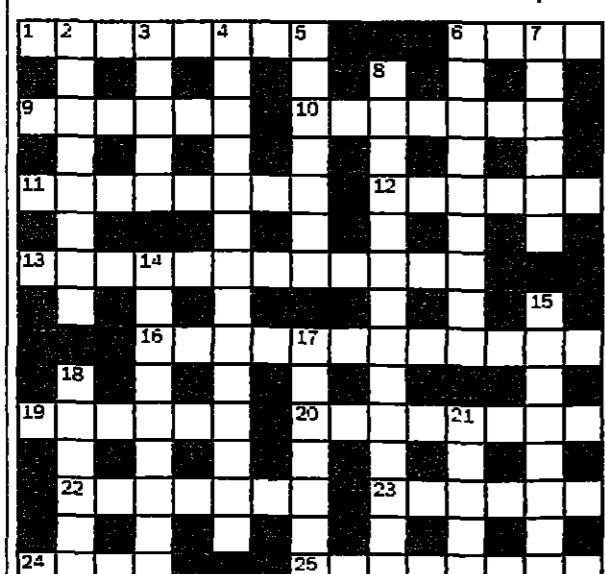
Meanwhile David Atfield announced the make-up of his six-man working party which has been set up to look into the running of the national team. The Essex chairman has called on two former England captains, David Gower and Mike Gatting, who will be joined by the Lancashire chairman, Bob Bennett. Micky Stewart, who was England's first manager from 1986 to 1992, and Tim Lamb, the TCCB's assistant secretary,

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD in association with



By Mass

Thursday's solution



ACROSS

- Pad out supporting essay (8)
- Incisive, about to lance hand (4)
- Hybrid is beginning to transmute further (6)
- One in arrears consequently entered as 16a? (7)
- Issues left in Red China, mostly resolved (8)
- Gilt-edged items? (6)
- Supple, our Tim - flexible, very adaptable (5-7)
- Cut? Yes and no (4-8)
- A row in the Strand? (6)
- Enjoyed the reception? (8)

DOWN

- Occasion for a jam session, perhaps (4-4)
- Women in work producing fabric (5)
- Defender accommodating North's heretical student of evolution (14)
- Fine, comparatively speaking, leaves one solvent (7)
- Losing a thou, plays on - just for the thrill of it? (7)
- East Europeans reportedly at point in pass (6)
- Man's vocalised song (4)
- Ghoulish set in original chiller (8)
- Alert everyone about hazardous ramble (5-4)
- Is timber incorporated in these models? (6)
- Dry State? (14)
- Orchestrator's approach reduced bright tone colour, we hear (9)
- Mishap with switch (8)
- Quell racket the Man-type) in violent scene (7)
- Oppressive humbug - ultimately in tyranny (6)
- English lad's set up dodge (5)

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CASEY SEEKS A PLACE IN THE SUN

Ken Jones meets the Grand National trainer of Rough Quest page 28



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Peschisolido's return enlivens quiet deadline day

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As for Rushden & Diamonds,



Jamie Osborne tumbles from Black Humour in the Martell Cup Chase at Aintree yesterday, breaking his collarbone and missing the winning mount in the next race, Ask Tom

Report and results, page 29; photograph, Alisport

Agassi's audacity thrills

JOHN ROBERTS

reports from Key Biscayne

Steffi Graf is one match from winning the Lipton Championship for a fifth time, having defeated the American Lindsay Davenport, 6-4, 6-4, in the semi-finals here yesterday.

Continuing the dominant form which has marked her matches, the Wimbledon champion swiftly ended the eighth semi-finals here yesterday.

It is doubtful that Key Biscayne has heard such a roar of appreciation, and the defending champion bowed to one and all.

"Shots like that make it hard to retire," Agassi said. "Down the road you think back at moments like that and you think, 'Wow, pretty exciting.'"

Not that the 25-year-old Agassi is breaking towards the rock chair. He intends to add to the stockpile of memories, and believes that his debut at the Olympic Games in Atlanta will rank among the best.

Four years ago, he was too far down the world rankings, at No 12, to be selected for the Barcelona Olympics, which took place only weeks after his triumph at Wimbledon.

Boetsch, the No 15 seed, has

defeated Joyce, 6-4, 6-1, and the cameo occurred in the third game of the second set. Asked if such wizardry was likely to break an opponent's spirit, he said: "I think it pisses them off, more than anything."

Joyce, a 23-year-old Californian, ranked No 71 in the world, simply marvelled at Agassi's audacity, and it is a fair bet that the Las Vegas's semi-final opponent, Arnaud Boetsch, would do the same.

The personable Frenchman's approach to his match in the quarter-finals delighted the crowd, who became impatient with Jim Courier's penitence.

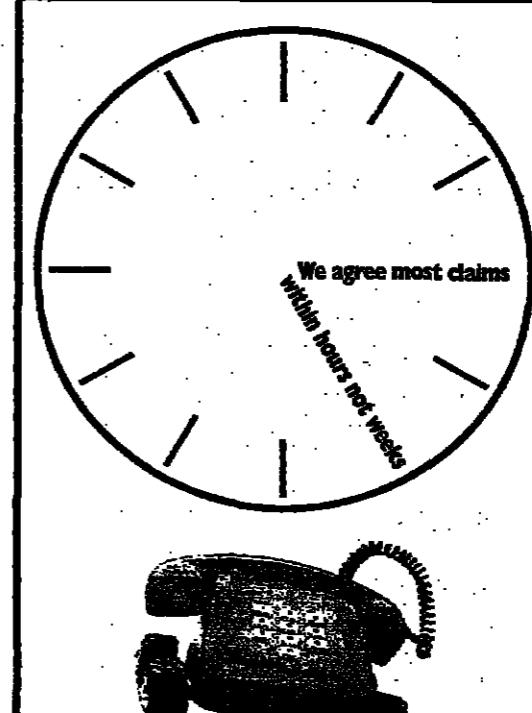
While the Floridian squandered all but four of 24 break points, and glowered at the line-judges, Boetsch took his three chances and enjoyed himself.

Boetsch, the No 15 seed, has defeated Agassi once before, losing 6-3, 6-2, 6-0, in the third round of the 1990 French Open. The American going on to be defeated by Andres Gomez in the final.

A job is what rugby union is about to become to its leading practitioners - hence Healey's move.

Mark Ring, the former Wales stand-off, is already in rugby employment as West Hartlepool's player-coach and will make his league debut against Saracens tomorrow, too late to save West from relegation unless it transpires that there is none.

"Austin has signed for Leicesters to better his chances of playing for England and I have no qualms about his motives at



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